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ABSTRACT

This study guide offers 53 essays and articles in 9 study sessions on the causes and consequences of racism and a vision for change from a Christian perspective. The guide is updated to include articles addressing issues raised by the riots in Los Angeles (California), the 25th anniversary of the legislative victories of the Civil Rights Movement, and the Columbus quincentenary. The guide argues that the founding racial crimes of the nation, extermination of the indigenous populations and slavery of Africans, are the nation's "original sins," which have theological as well as historical meanings that must be faced. The resource is structured to facilitate a study-action-reflection process that is most effective when used in a group setting with time for discussion of the articles and accompanying study questions. Study Session 9 and Appendix 1 offer practical suggestions and "how-to" information for such activities. Study Session titles are as follows: (1) "Racism: Prejudice of the Powerful"; (2) "The Deep Scars of Discrimination"; (3) "The Pain of Oppression"; (4) "An Uncomfortable Privilege"; (5) "Pioneers in Racial Justice"; (6) "What's Wrong With Integration?"; (7) "Body, Blood, and Spirit"; (8) "The Data of a New America"; and (9) "A Call to Action." Appendixes describe educational activities designed to involve others in the process of confronting racist attitudes in one's church and community, list national organizations, and suggest resources for further study. (JB)

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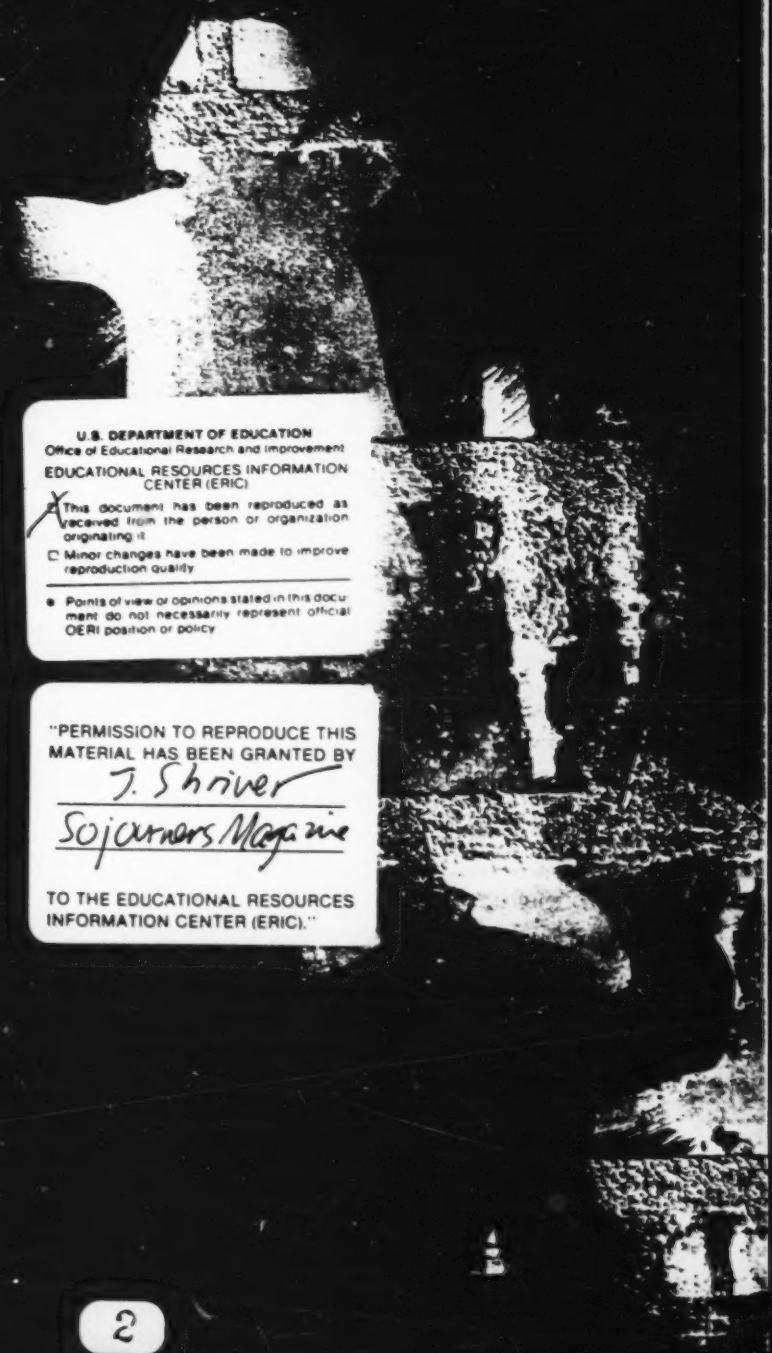
AMERICA'S ORIGINAL SIN

A Study Guide on White Racism

NEW, EXPANDED EDITION



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FROM THE EDITORS OF

Sojourners

SOJOURNERS

KEEPING FAITH, DOING JUSTICE, BUILDING COMMUNITY

Sojourners is an ecumenical Christian community and magazine located in the inner city of Washington, D.C. We exist as an expression of the gospel—rooted in faith and deeply committed to justice.

Our vocation is to serve the wider community of sojourners: those people who believe in and work for God's promise for justice, wholeness, healing, and peace.

Together sojourners are an active, diverse, and extended community of faith seeking spiritual renewal and social transformation.

Rick Reinhard

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- Dominican Sisters of Springfield, Illinois
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INTRODUCTION

AMERICA'S RACIAL HISTORY has affected us all in profound ways, and it is still shaping our national experience and obstructing the fulfillment of our professed values. Its face is dramatically revealed in the continued devastation of native, black, and other communities of color; in the legacy of benefit still enjoyed by most white people; and in the fear and anger felt by many whites facing shrinking economic realities and the temptation to scapegoat racial minorities.

Opening ourselves to the voices of transformation becomes an opportunity to explore the meaning of repentance. Repentance means far more than feeling sorry (and long-suffering people of color deserve more than white guilt feelings). The biblical meaning of repentance is to turn around. It means to change your course and your behavior by heading in a new direction.

Robert Fox/Impact Visuals

Few dispute the historical facts of the European conquest of what came to be known as "the Americas." The violence and brutality instigated by Columbus and carried on by subsequent "explorers," "pioneers," and "settlers" can scarcely be denied. The consequences for the native peoples who inhabited the conquered lands were catastrophic. Through a combination of military campaigns and disease-borne extermination, the "Indians" suffered a holocaust.

The near destruction of the indigenous population and the insatiable greed of the conquerors led to the second great evil in founding the nations of the Western Hemisphere—the slave trade. Kidnapped Africans made into property died by the millions along with their Native American brothers and sisters, and those who survived were forced to endure one of the most cruel forms of slavery in human history.

These founding events of the American nations are not just historical. They also have theological meaning. The systematic violence, both physical and spiritual, done first to indigenous people and then to black Africans was the original sin of the American nations. In other words, the United States of America was conceived in iniquity.

Whatever else is "right" about America does not erase that original sin. The good things about this country and the reasons many have come here need not be denied, but the brutal founding facts of nationhood must be faced up to. Like any sin this one must be dealt with, for the sake of our integrity but also because the legacy of that original history is still with us.

An American future worthy of its best ideals depends on our honestly coming to terms with our origins and their continued influence. The nation's original sin of racism must be faced in a way that we have never really done before; only then can America be "rediscovered." To that end we offer this study guide on the causes and consequences of racism and the hopes and visions for God's new creation.

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

THIS REVISED AND EXPANDED second edition of *America's Original Sin* has been substantially updated to include new articles addressing issues raised by the rebellion in Los Angeles, the 25th anniversary of the legislative victories of the civil rights movement, and the realities exposed by the Columbus quincentenary. Expanded to include a greater variety of voices, this resource speaks to the racial issues of the '90s.

We structured the resource to facilitate a study-action-reflection process. This study guide will be most effective, we believe, when it is used in a group setting, with time for discussion of both the articles and the accompanying study questions.

It may be most useful to finish the entire study before planning any follow-up activities. Session 9 and Appendix 1 offer practical suggestions and "how-to" information for such activities. These ideas can involve the entire church or just the study group. Planning activities that include and focus on children is especially encouraged.

The change that can come by using this resource will not be easy. White people must realize that an attitude of exclusivity or superiority around solutions or styles of change is itself racist. When working with people from different racial backgrounds, white people must be sure to listen to and respond to the leadership and direction given by minority persons. They must not assume that they know better ways to solve a problem.

It is important, therefore, to follow each activity with a time for reflection on the impact of the activity on you, your group, and your church. Based on this evaluation, the next appropriate activity can be planned.

A commitment to reconciliation, whether new or revitalized by this study guide, can direct you toward an exciting journey. It can have an important impact on all our lives and on the life of our country. We offer you our prayers as we make this journey together.

—Bob Hulteen and Jim Wallis

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RACISM: PREJUDICE *of the* POWERFUL

▲ WHEN BRUTALITY IS RECORDED on videotape or when inner cities erupt, the topic of racism re-enters the realm of discussion for white Americans. The rest of the time, however, most white people have the luxury of ignorance regarding racism in America, as well as the benefits whites continue to glean from the system.

The articles in this introductory session focus on the spiritual and psychological underpinnings of racism, calling our attention to the ongoing struggle of people of color. Each paints a vivid picture of the role of the white church in perpetuating racist attitudes and concentrates on the need for all God's people to struggle against this evil.

George Holliday video

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AMERICA'S ORIGINAL SIN

THE LEGACY OF WHITE RACISM

by Jim Wallis

THE UNITED STATES of America was established as a white society, founded upon the near genocide of another race and then the enslavement of yet another.

That statement has always generated an emotional response. Some say it's outrageous; some say courageous. But it is simply a statement of historical fact. The reaction is instructive and revealing. The historical record of how white Europeans conquered North America by destroying the native population, and how they then built their new nation's economy on the backs of kidnapped Africans who had been turned into chattel are facts that can hardly be denied. Yet to speak honestly of such historical facts is to be charged with being polemical or out of date. Why?

RACISM NEGATES THE REASON FOR WHICH CHRIST DIED—THE RECONCILING WORK OF THE CROSS.

One reason is that racism is no longer a hot topic. After the brief "racial crisis" of the '60s, white America, including many of those involved in the civil rights movement, has gone on to other concerns. Also, the legal victories of black Americans in that period, as far as most white Americans are concerned, have settled the issue and even left many asking, "What more do blacks want?"

Federal courts have recently interpreted civil rights legislation—originally designed to redress discrimination against black people—as applying to the grievances of whites who believe affirmative action programs have "gone too far." In addition, popular racial attitudes have changed, attested to by the opinion polls and the increased number of black faces appearing in the world of sports, entertainment, the mass media, and even politics. After all, *The Cosby Show* has been the highest-rated TV series in the country, and Jesse Jackson ran for president.

Indeed, in the two decades since the passage of momentous civil rights legislation, some things have changed and some things haven't. What has changed is the personal racial attitudes of some white Americans and the opportunities for some black Americans to enter the middle levels of society. (The word "middle" is key here, insofar as blacks have yet to be allowed into the upper echelons and decision-making positions of business, the professions, the media, or even the fields of sports and entertainment where black "progress" has so often been celebrated.) Legal segregation has been lifted off the backs of black people with the consequent expansion of social interchange and voting rights, and that itself has led to changes in white attitudes.

What has not changed is the systematic and pervasive character of racism in the United States and the condition of life for the majority of black people. In fact, those conditions have gotten worse.

Racism originates in domination and provides the social rationale and philosophical justification for debasing, degrading, and doing violence to people on the basis of color. Many have pointed out how racism is sustained by both personal attitudes and structural forces. Racism can be brutally overt or invisibly institutional, or both. Its scope extends to every level and area of human psychology, society, and culture.

Prejudice may be a universal human sin, but racism is more than an inevitable consequence of human nature or social accident. Rather, racism is a system of oppression for a social purpose.

In the United States, the original purpose of racism was to justify slavery and its enormous economic benefit. The particular form of racism, inherited from the English to justify their own slave trade, was especially venal, for it defined the slave not merely as an unfortunate victim of bad circumstances, war, or social dislocation but rather as less than human, as a thing, an animal, a piece of property to be bought and sold, used, and abused.

The slave did not have to be treated with any human consideration whatsoever. Even in the founding document of our nation, the famous constitutional compromise defined the slave as only three-fifths of a person. The professed high ideals of Anglo-Western society could exist side by side with the profitable institution of slavery only if the humanity of the slave were denied and disregarded.

The heart of racism was and is economic, though its roots and results are also deeply cultural, psychological, sexual, even religious, and, of course, political. Due to 200 years of brutal slavery and 100 more of legal segregation and discrimination, no area of the relation-

Paul Willis

ship between black and white people in the United States is free from the legacy of racism.

IN SPIRITUAL AND BIBLICAL terms, racism is a perverse sin that cuts to the core of the gospel message. Put simply, racism negates the reason for which Christ died—the reconciling work of the cross. It denies the purpose of the church: to bring together, in Christ, those who have been divided from one another, particularly in the early church's case, Jew and Gentile—a division based on race.

There is only one remedy for such a sin and that is repentance, which, if genuine, will always bear fruit in concrete forms of conversion, changed behavior, and reparation. While the United States may have changed in regard to some of its racial attitudes and allowed some of its black citizens into the middle class, white America has yet to recognize the extent of its racism—that we are and have always been a racist society—much less to repent of its racial sins.

RACISM HAS TO DO WITH THE POWER TO DOMINATE AND ENFORCE OPPRESSION, AND THAT POWER IN AMERICA IS IN WHITE HANDS.

And because of that lack of repentance and, indeed, because of the economic, social, and political purposes still served by the oppression of black people, systematic racism continues to be pervasive in American life. While constantly minimized by white social commentators and the media, evidence of the persistent and endemic character of American racism abounds.

The most visible and painful sign of racism's continuation is the gross economic inequality between blacks and whites. All the major social indices and numerous statistics show the situation to be worsening, not improving. The gap between white and black median family income and employment actually widened in the decade between 1970 and 1980, even before Ronald Reagan took office. And the Reagan and Bush administrations have been like an economic plague to the black community; black unemployment has skyrocketed, and the major brunt of slashed and gutted social services has been borne by black people, especially women and children.

All this has especially affected black youth, whose rate of unemployment has climbed above 50 percent. The last time I checked, the unemployment rate for young black people in Washington, D.C., was 61 percent. The very human meaning to such grim statistics can be seen in the faces of the kids in my inner-city neighborhood. They know they have no job, no place, no future, and therefore no real stake in this country. As one commentator has put it, society has ceased to be a society for them. Alcohol, drugs, poverty, family disintegration, crime, and jail have replaced aspirations for a decent life and a hopeful future.

It is the economy itself that now enforces the brutal oppression of racism, and it happens, of course, invisibly and impersonally. In the changing capitalist order, manufacturing jobs are lost to cheaper labor markets in the Third World or to automation while farm labor becomes extinct; both historically have been important to black survival. In the new "high-tech" world and "service economy," almost the only jobs available are at places like McDonalds.

Increasingly, we see a two-tiered economy emerging: one a highly lucrative level of technicians and professionals who operate the system, and the other an impoverished sector of unemployed, underemployed, and unskilled labor from which the work of servicing the system can be done. That blacks are disproportionately consigned to the lowest economic tier is an indisputable proof of racism. The existence of a vast black underclass, inhabiting the inner cities of our nation, is a testimony to the versatility of white racism 20 years after legal segregation was officially outlawed.

THE PAIN OF ECONOMIC marginalization is made worse by the growing class distinctions within the black community itself. Middle-class blacks, having taken advantage of the legal gains of the '60s, have further distanced themselves from the poor black population. Never has the class and cultural split in the black community been so great. In Atlanta, Washington, D.C., and other cities, a black elite prospers and lives an entirely different social existence, not in proximity to but in full view of an increasingly resentful and angry black underclass.

In Washington, D.C., subway routes follow class and racial lines, carrying middle-class commuters around downtown, through gentrified areas of the city, and out into the suburbs—avoiding black ghettos. The buses running along the affluent white and black "gold coast" of 16th Street are new and air-conditioned, while just two blocks away, old, hot, and broken-down buses run along the infamous 14th Street corridor through a major black ghetto. All this exists under a black city government.

To be fair, the increase in black political power over municipal governments has given black political leaders all the problems of modern urban life, including inadequate city budgets, without any real power or leverage to change the national policies and priorities that create the problems in the first place. Nevertheless, transcending the growing barriers between the relatively affluent middle class and the impoverished underclass is one of the most important and problematic challenges facing the black community.

The cold economic savagery of racism has led to further declines in every area of the quality of life in the black community—health, infant mortality, family breakdown, drug and alcohol abuse, and crime. The majority of black children are now born to single mothers; a primary cause of death for young black men today is homicide; and nearly half of all prison inmates in the United States now are black males.

Despite landmark court decisions and civil rights legislation, two-thirds of black Americans still suffer from education and housing that is both segregated and inferior. Such conditions, along with diminishing social services, lead to despair, massive substance abuse, and criminality, and the fact that this reality is still surprising or incomprehensible to many white Americans raises the question of how much racial attitudes have really changed.

In the face of such structural oppression, the deliberate rollback of civil rights programs during the Reagan

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administration becomes even more callous. The resurgence of more overt forms of white racism and violence, as exemplified by the incidents in Bensonhurst and Howard Beach, New York; Forsyth County, Georgia; and other places, is quite foreboding as yet another occasion when the discontented alienation of poor whites is displaced and expressed against blacks instead of at the system that oppresses them both and has always sought to turn them against each other.

The connection of racism to U.S. militarism should, by now, be painfully clear. First, military spending results in cuts in social services to the victims of the system who are disproportionately people of color. Second, the military definition of national security puts a prior claim on vast material, scientific, and human resources that could otherwise be directed toward achieving justice, which then is proclaimed as not being a practical financial option. Third, lacking other educational and job opportunities, racial minorities are herded into dehumanizing military service in disproportionate numbers and then assigned to combat units. And finally, young black men from the ghetto face the defined enemies of the United States on the field of battle, usually other people of color from the Third World—in places such as Vietnam, Central America, and Iraq—where they kill and are killed.

The failure of the mostly white, middle-class peace movement in the United States to make such connections and enter into a vital political partnership with oppressed racial minorities is a primary reason for the ineffectiveness of that movement. Even in the peace movement, racism becomes a debilitating force that robs us of opportunities to work toward a more just and peaceful nation.

THE STRATEGIES FOR HOW black people must confront and finally overcome the ever-changing face of white racism in America must always originate within the black community itself. White allies have and can continue to play a significant role in the struggle against racism when black autonomy and leadership are sufficiently present to make possible a genuine partnership. But an even more important task for white Americans is to examine ourselves, our relationships, our institutions, and our society for the ugly plague of racism.

Whites in America must admit the reality and begin to operate on the assumption that theirs is a racist society. Positive individual attitudes are simply not enough, for, as we have seen, racism is more than just personal.

All white people in the United States have benefited from the structure of racism, whether or not they have ever committed a racist act, uttered a racist word, or had a racist thought (as unlikely as that is). Just as surely as blacks suffer in a white society because they are black, whites benefit because they are white. And if whites have profited from a racist structure, they must try to change it.

To benefit from domination is to be responsible for it. Merely to keep personally free of the taint of racist attitudes is both illusory and inadequate. Just to go along with a racist social structure, to accept the economic order as it is, just to do one's job within impersonal institutions is to participate in racism.

Racism has to do with the power to dominate and enforce oppression, and that power in America is in white hands. Therefore, while there are instances of black racial prejudice against whites in the United States today (often in reaction to white racism), there is no such thing as black racism. Black people in America do not have the power to enforce that prejudice.

White racism in white institutions must be eradicated by white people and not just black people. In fact, white racism is primarily a white responsibility.

We must not give in to the popular temptation to believe that racism existed mostly in the Old South or before the 1960s or, today, in South Africa. Neither can any of our other struggles against militarism, environmental destruction, hunger, homelessness, or sexism be separated from the reality of racism.

The church must, of course, get its own house in order. It is still riddled with racism and segregation. The exemplary role of the black church in the struggle against racism offers a sharp indictment to white churches, which still mostly reflect the racial structures around them.

The church still has the capacity to be the much-needed prophetic interrogator of a system that has always depended upon racial oppression. The gospel remains clear. The church still should and can be a spiritual and social community where the ugly barriers of race are finally torn down to reveal the possibilities of a different American future. ■

JIM WALLIS is editor of Sojourners and a pastor of Sojourners Community in Washington, D.C.

WE, THE [WHITE] PEOPLE

A HISTORY OF OPPRESSION

by Calvin S. Morris

RACIST FAITH, that belief system which invests ultimate meaning in the biology of white skin color, has permeated American history from its beginning. Thus, while this nation has experienced times when the dream of racial equality and human solidarity seemed close to realization—such as the years following the American Revolution, the Civil War and Reconstruction, and the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s—the specter of racism has persisted. And despite past and contemporary assertions that race is a declining factor in American life, racism's resurgence, whether following the World War I crusade to "save the world for democracy" or the World War II effort to preserve "the four freedoms" or during the Reagan and Bush administrations' attempts to "make America strong again," is blatantly clear. From whence does this persistence come and how can its tenacity be explained?

In 1987, the United States celebrated the bicentennial of its Constitution, a document noble in its ideals of human freedom and far-reaching in the implications of its affirmation that the constituted government derives its being and power from "the people." It is a document heralding freedom from all tyrannies and asserting by natural rights that the people may compact together to govern themselves.

While historians debate how inclusive the term "we, the people" was concerning white males—for example, whether propertied or non-propertied—there is little debate that women, Native Americans, and black peoples were not intended for inclusion in the compact. Over the last two centuries, scholars, jurists, presidents, and the American people have debated whether the Constitution contains truths that transcend the time-centered understandings of its framers and whether there is an inclusiveness present in the document that the framers' historical narrowness cannot conceal.

Although black people had been in the colonies since 1619, their participation in society had been circumscribed by their conditions as indentured servants and slaves. By the 1660s this status as slaves became fixed for life. Thus to be a slave was to be black, and the blackness of one's skin was a mark of one's status.

Those who possessed white skin were masters, and those of darker hue were slaves. In the case of free blacks, their free status was secondary to their racial classification. Even though the percentage of whites owning slaves was always small, those whites who did not own slaves could identify with and aspire to the privileged class who did.

More important—and this is crucial to an understanding of American racism—no white man, whatever and however debased his circumstance, need consider himself less than a slave. His sense of self, his sense of being, and his place in the world were formed and fashioned by the presence of the black others, who mirrored in their bondage and perpetual servitude his whiteness, his freedom, and his limitless possibility.

If Jean Paul Sartre was right in his book *Anti-Semite and Jew*, then white Americans have needed black Americans psychologically, as much as the anti-Semite needs the Jew, in order to forge a sense of their own selfhood and being as a people and a nation. That black presence as an economic, political, social, and psychological reality, although not directly mentioned in the final draft of the Constitution, was crucial to the outcome of the Constitutional Convention and the formation and future direction of this nation.

FOR A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER of delegates to the Constitutional Convention, the institution of slavery was a present and future means of economic prosperity. At a personal level, their fortunes, prestige, status, and place in society were based upon the enslavement of black people.

Other delegates to the convention sought an end to the slave trade and slavery, finding the two incompatible with democratic principles. Following the War for Independence, some northern and middle colonies abolished slavery, noting that their successful struggle against tyranny would not allow them to hold others in chains. Their detractors countered that these actions cost little since slavery had not been a profitable venture in those environs.

However much the delegates agreed or disagreed over slavery and other issues, the vast majority sought to create a mechanism of governance that would endure. The interests of black people, then and now, were secondary to the issues of nation-building and union. Abraham Lincoln expressed this sentiment many years later when he indicated that if he could save the Union by freeing none, some, or all of the slaves, he would do

whatever was necessary to achieve his objective. Rare indeed was the white person, however enlightened, who did not share basic assumptions about the inferiority of black people and the superiority of white people.

Many whites who hated slavery did not love slaves, or free blacks for that matter. Significant among those who abhorred the "slavocracy" and its extension prior to 1860 were those who worked to deny blacks entrance to the Northwest Territories, lobbied against their being enfranchised, approved segregated educational systems, prohibited interracial marriage, and blocked black participation in state militias. White working men, while denouncing slavery as antithetical to free labor and the rights of working men, demonstrated and rioted to prevent blacks, free and slave, from laboring beside them, and so structured their organization that blacks were prevented from joining them. Free blacks were perceived as their economic competitors, and, undoubtedly at the unconscious level whites saw them as a threat to their own precarious lower-class social status.

Even white abolitionists were known to draw the line in their interactions with blacks when it came to socializing and personal relationships. Black abolitionists bitterly complained that their white supporters' advocacy of racial equality often stopped at the platform, the pulpit, and the rostrum.

In many ways the treatment of free blacks during the antebellum period is irrefutable proof of the persistence of racism even when the status of slavery had been removed. Being neither slaves nor free, free blacks often inhabited a "no man's land" in American society between whites and slaves. They had few rights by law and were often subject to harassment, intimidation, prejudice, discrimination, and violence by the white majority.

Despite their circumscribed and precarious existence, free blacks established churches and religious denominations, newspapers and periodicals, fraternal organizations, burial societies, schools, insurance companies, small businesses, and other self-help entities. They petitioned state legislatures, and the state and federal courts when possible, for redress of grievances. They also met in national conventions to demonstrate their solidarity with one another and with their separated slave sisters and brothers. They supported causes designed to abolish slavery, and the free black community of Philadelphia was a major contributor to the work of white abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison and the *Liberator* magazine.

These "free" people led lives that called into question America's racist assumptions about their character, their moral and intellectual endowment, and their abilities as children of God. It is a testimony to their courage and endurance that the free black community survived, despite white society's indifference, its open hostility at times, and its constant refusal to recognize their existence as a viable reality in America. The community was despised and ignored primarily because it did not match the black image resident in the white person's mind.

THE FOUNDERS OF THIS NATION faced a dilemma posed by the conflict between freedom and slavery. A people proclaiming as the bedrock of their political existence the concept of human liberty as a natural endowment given by God nonetheless held others in chains. Thus, the United States was founded upon political and moral ambiguities so profound that its characterization of itself as a land of freedom and human liberty has to it the sound of hypocrisy. And after 200 years, the national conundrum is yet with us.

The query preceding the Civil War, Can this nation survive half-slave and half-free? was also raised at the Constitutional Convention. Moderate and judicious men, although keenly aware of the dangers posed by the question, looked the other way, leaving to the generations to come the responsibility of providing an answer. The founders compromised their higher principles of freedom and human liberty for all on the altar of freedom and human liberty for some.

BLACK PRESENCE WOULD BECOME THE PRISM THROUGH WHICH THE AMERICAN DREAM OF EQUALITY AND HUMAN FREEDOM WOULD BE MEASURED THROUGHOUT OUR HISTORY.

Freedom and human liberty as an ideal would in practice be the inheritance of white men, and the material capitalization of that legacy would be grafted upon the backs of black people. White freedom, liberty, and opportunity were therefore dependent upon black servitude, oppression, and life-long subjugation. Black freedom and human liberty were sacrificed for the benefit of the fledgling democracy.

One of the pivotal ironies of American history is that the "noble experiment in democracy" would not have been possible without the presence and sacrifice of black people. In a similar ironic vein, the black presence would become the prism through which the American dream of equality and human freedom would be measured throughout our history.

While racism, defined by George D. Kelsey as "a rationalized pseudoscientific theory positing the innate and permanent inferiority of non-whites," did not come to full fruition until the mid-19th century, many of its tendencies were present during the formation of the colonies. Winthrop Jordon in his book, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812*, attests to this by noting that white racial antipathies toward blacks based upon color, cultural differences, and social rank and status, were present in colonial America.

Blacks were perceived "as a permanently alien and unassimilable element of the population." Thomas Jefferson in his day and Abraham Lincoln in his time strongly doubted that blacks and whites could ever live together in America on an equal basis. Both men advocated the colonization or removal of free blacks from America, and Lincoln considered such a plan for the ex-slaves following emancipation. The reasons for these views are complex, but at the root of them are the racist images that whites held concerning blacks.

According to George M. Fredrickson's *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*, blacks were considered physically, intellectually, and temperamentally different from whites and believed to be inferior to whites in

fundamental human qualities. Because whites considered such differences either permanent or open to exceedingly slow change, they believed that blacks and whites should be kept apart socially and in other ways possibly injurious to the white majority. If blacks were to be a part of the society, it was felt that they should hold an inferior position to all whites.

Whites believed that the position and place of black people in American society was not governed by the greed, hypocrisy, and power of whites, but by black people's own deficiencies and negative endowments. The victims were blamed for their circumstances, and white America was absolved from all responsibility and guilt in its racist and mythological formulations of racial superiority. Perhaps a people rooted in the belief in Christian Providence and God-ordained rights had to justify the enslavement and continued subjugation of others by enumerating the motes in the others' eyes, while failing to see the beams in their own eyes.

RACISM, WHICH IS A MODERN phenomenon, purports to use science as the hallmark for its truth. It holds that certain races are naturally superior or inferior. Nature, not environment, holds the final decision.

By the mid-19th century, racist theorists in America and Europe, employing the writings of Charles Darwin and Edward Spencer, presented "scientific" evidence confirming the superiority of white Western civilization over any other peoples of color. The last three decades of the 19th century saw European imperialism at its height as white Christian civilization subdued Africa and significant portions of Asia.

The United States joined the colonial power club with its defeat of Spain in 1898 and its acquisition of Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines. During those three decades, the progress of the Civil War and the Reconstruction years was overturned, and white racism and its supremacist doctrines were ascendant in both the South and the North.

Black people were relegated to the lower rungs of American society. Political participation and the right to vote were rescinded by subterfuge, threat, intimidation, economic reprisal, physical injury, and death. Lynchings increased, as did the historic proclivity of white rioters to burn and pillage helpless and unprotected black communities.

No institution was immune to racist views, and the Supreme Court in an 1896 decision *Plessy v. Ferguson* gave its imprimatur to Jim Crow, the legal substructure of racism. The North, preoccupied with industrialization and making money, delivered black people once again into the hands of those Southerners who knew them best. Racism, and its attendant white supremacy ideology, had triumphed.

It would take black people and their allies 58 years to overturn *Plessy v. Ferguson* with the 1954 Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education*. And it would take nearly 100 years to confirm the ratification of the 15th Amendment to the Constitution through the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The vast majority of pseudoscientific data undergirding the racist ideology of the past has been disproved, although a few contemporary racist ideologues continue to promote their theories. Yet racism as described in these pages has not been routed, seemingly, and many are the reasons for this circumstance.

THE CONSTITUTION HAS continued to live, and its elasticity has allowed that others perhaps not originally recognized in the compact are, nevertheless, significant partners within it. Black people, on the whole, have held to that document more because of what it might become than for what it was originally. America has changed, and its posture as a world power has occasioned a need for social cohesion and relative peace within the country.

The advent of new nations in Africa and Asia arising out of the ashes of European colonial empires prompted the United States to reconsider its position vis-à-vis these new nations, and this has affected its treatment of its own black minority. Black people have changed from an overwhelmingly Southern rural people to an overwhelmingly urban populace, more assertive, more self-assured, and—for a minority group within the minority—more self-sufficient.

Participation in two world wars, albeit in segregated units, and full participation in an integrated military in Korea and Vietnam have further strengthened the resolve of most black people that America, whatever its shortcomings, is still their country. Within the past two decades, a small but significant number of blacks have been elected to public office, and more young black people are attending institutions of higher education than ever before (although the numbers are decreasing due to governmental cutbacks in scholarships and financial aid). It is not a rarity today to see blacks positioned in middle-management slots in major American corporations. We even had a black candidate for president of the United States. Still, there is no cause to be sanguine about America's continuing racial dilemma.

The Reagan administration was determined to dismantle many of the civil rights gains of the past two decades. The attorney general and the Department of Justice have entered numerous friend-of-the-court briefs supporting efforts that challenge affirmative action, voting rights extensions, and the government's right to withhold federal funds from schools that discriminate on the basis of sex and race.

Perhaps more ominous than the above is the atmosphere that the Reagan administration spawned. Racial incidents at the Citadel in South Carolina and in Howard Beach, New York, and the continual absence of black people in decision-making positions in government, business, banking, news media, sports, and higher education is cause for alarm. Racism is alive and well in America. It was central to our becoming a nation, and it has been a continuing fact in our evolution as a people.

RACISM AT ITS CORE is a sin and idolatry because it not only calls into question God's creation, but offers a counter-deity—biology or nature—as the subject of adoration. Racism values and devalues life according to its hierarchy of the good.

Accordingly, the lives of those with white skin become more valued than those of other skin colors. As public policy this faith is enacted in a prison population made up of poor, uneducated, and black and brown people far in excess of their percentages in the population. Black and minority infants die at an alarming rate,

and teen-age and young adult homicide figures among blacks are depressingly high. While 11 percent of the U.S. population is black, 25 percent of all AIDS cases are in the black community. Hispanics, who make up 7 percent of the U.S. population, account for 11 percent of AIDS cases. Black unemployment continues at its historic range of at least twice the national average for whites. Native American unemployment in some areas approaches 50 percent. It is doubtful that American society would tolerate such figures among the white population.

Racism assumes the power to define the self in relation to others and to structure reality in ways that appear to corroborate that definition. Since blacks were considered ordained by nature to be less than whites in every way, white power sought to institutionalize that "truth" into the very fabric of American life.

For example, racist thought insisted that blacks were lacking in intellectual endowments, thus every effort had to be made to deny black people education and learning. During slavery it was unlawful to teach those in bondage to read and write, and free blacks were often denied the most rudimentary educational opportunities as well. Following the efforts during Reconstruction to institute free public education for all in the South, these same legislatures, with the tacit approval of the North, constructed an educational system in which the vast majority of public education funds went to segregated white schools.

This disparity in educational opportunities for blacks in the South continued until the middle of this century. In the North, with the rise of suburbia and the flight of whites from the cities, urban public education has become increasingly identified with black and brown minority children, and the commitment to publicly financed education has weakened in some quarters. One must ponder whether the questions about public education's efficacy as a tool for social advancement reflect America's estimation of the worth and academic abilities of its minority constituents.

The theme of "America, a white man's country," has been a recurrent one in U.S. history. From the 1820s and the extension of the franchise to non-propertied white males to the contemporary utterings of neo-Nazis, one hears the "America for whites only" refrain. There may be a hint of this in the efforts of some Americans to make English the national language of the United States. The fear of being inundated by foreign hordes, so prevalent during the period of the second great European migration to America, from 1880 to 1914, may provide a partial explanation for the present concern that white middle- and upper-middle-class women are having fewer children. The fear then and now focuses around the possibility that white people will be overwhelmed by the more prolific black and brown peoples.

RACISM SEEKS TO DEFINE the being of others and subsequently to deny their God-given humanity based upon skin color and racial designation. Racism calls into question the nature of God and God's creative order.

American churches have for the most part capitulated to this racist ideology. Sometimes in its pronouncement, more often in its silence, and most certainly in its institutionalized life and practice the church has given sanction and blessing and occasionally theological justification for racism. While abolitionist fervor during the years before and immediately following the Civil War was a striking example of the religious impulse emanating from the Second Great Awakening, and despite the church's involvement in the civil rights revolution of the 1950s and '60s, its overall stance as a proponent of racial equality has been weak and ineffective, when not downright antagonistic.

The God of white American religion has been a captive of its own racist ideology. It fell to black American churches to call to the remembrance of white and black Christians the biblical affirmation that God made all the nations to dwell upon the face of the Earth. Despite their beleaguered circumstances and virtual invisibility in white, Christian America, and their long-standing obligation to provide black people "a shelter in a time of storms," black churches have been in the forefront of the struggle for a racially free and just America.

The primary task of the black churches has been to make theologically real and relevant a God who creates with meaning and purpose and who sides with the oppressed. In the face of society's never-ending efforts to deny the basic humanity of black peoples, black churches have taught their members to know with certainty that "if anybody asks you who I am, tell them I'm a child of God."

Black church theology has apprehended a God who joins with God's people in fighting their battles and in their efforts to overcome, a God who so identifies with God's people through the life, ministry, and sacrifice of Jesus that the weakness of the Son shows most gloriously the strength and power of God. ■

Racism is a faith, but a form of idolatry. It is an abortive search for meaning. In its early modern beginnings, racism was a justification device. It did not emerge as a faith. It arose as an ideological justification for the constellations of political and economic power which were expressed in colonialism and slavery. But gradually the idea of the superior race was heightened and deepened in meaning and value so that it pointed beyond the historical structures of relation, in which it emerged, to human existence itself. The alleged superior race became and now persists as a center of value and an object of devotion. Multitudes of [people] gain their sense of "power of being" from this membership in the superior race. Accordingly, the most deprived white [people] culturally and economically, [are] able to think of [themselves] as "better'n any nigger."

—GEORGE D. KELSEY
Racism and the Christian

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PUTTING OUR MONEY WHERE IT MATTERS

AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE REPENTANCE TANGIBLE

by Yvonne V. Delk

WE ARE A PEOPLE on a journey–a journey from centuries of conquest, genocide, and slavery to conversion, repentance, and new history; a journey from exploitation and oppression to a time of turning, healing, reparation, and redirection. When a people are on a journey, there are two inseparable questions: Who am I? Where am I going? Identity and direction.

I struggle with answers that flow out of my distant past when African-American people experienced the whips and the chains, slave ships and auction blocks, plantations, the Ku Klux Klan, lynchings, separate but equal, bus boycotts, picket lines, and now the racism of the '90s, which continues to manifest itself East, West, North, and South while our president attacks the "politically correct" movement, states in clear terms his view that the government does not have the responsibility to provide for the human welfare of the people, and vetoes the civil rights bill.

500 years after the arrival of Christopher Columbus in America, we continue to ask questions of identity and direction for all of us who have been touched and shaped by the world-changing realities that it set into motion. The anniversary of this event is an opportunity—a moment of truth, a moment of turning, a moment of redirection and new commitments, a moment to forge covenants that will lead us from the despair of our past and present to the promise and hope of our future.

AS AN AFRICAN AMERICAN, I experience with a great deal of pain the history that was set into motion when Christopher Columbus landed in the Americas in 1492. Six years later Vasco da Gama sailed around the Cape of Good Hope in Africa. As the indigenous people in the Americas were exterminated, the invaders found themselves forced to locate an alternative labor force to continue the exploitation of the vast resources. They turned to Africa as a supply base of labor.

It was in 1518 that a Spanish ship carried the first cargo of our people from the Guinea Coast to the Americas. This opened a slave trade that was to endure for three-and-a-half centuries. The human cost is staggering. Some statistics put the total number of Africans who lost their lives during the middle passage (or before by resisting capture) at 200 million. The number of our people who reached the Americas as slaves was in the tens of millions.

We can never forget that we were taken by force, in chains, or that some of us came on slave ships called Jesus. We were seen as chattel, not human beings; as objects, not subjects; as property that could be bought, owned, possessed, and sold. In this nation of the free and the brave, we were only three-fifths of a human being, and we possessed no rights that whites had to respect.

With Christopher Columbus came a worldview of domination and control and a system that justified and sanctioned exploitation and enslavement. Within the context of the growth of capitalist wealth, doctrines of race and race difference began to appear. The worldview of domination and conquest saw the world in black and white. White, of course, was genetically superior and black genetically inferior. 1492 and the worldview that it represented rooted itself in a doctrine of racism that justified exploitation.

Racism became a strong support pillar for the worldview. Racism was legitimated, institutionalized, and locked into the social consciousness of the people at large. It became part of the collective psyche. The horrors that accompanied the plundering of Africa had to be justified. Race and racism therefore became a permanent stimulus for the ordering of exploitative relations.

The system of exploitation was also justified on the basis of religion. The power of the church was called upon to undertake the legitimating task. The church accompanied the explorations and was an intimate partner—a co-partner with colonial power and privilege.

There was a close relationship between missionaries who represented the church in its goal of conversion of the heathen and the economic goals and objectives of the invading countries. Missionaries often had a free passage on merchant ships; they often helped as interpreters to complete business transactions; funds for missionary work came largely from the state. And according to

Arthur Schlessinger Jr., in his book *The Missionary Enterprise and the Theories of Imperialism*, some missionaries did not hesitate to hint that the Christianizing of the heathen lands would produce much commercial benefit.

A congregational minister in a sermon in 1850 before the American Board of Commissioning for the Foreign Missions said, "If the manufacturers of our country find their way to Africa and China, to the Sandwich Islands, and India in increasing abundance and produce correspondingly remunerative returns, it is because the herald of salvation has gone before, seeking the welfare of the people, changing their habits of life, breaking down their prejudices, and creating a demand for comforts and wealth before unknown."

This history of racism continued into religious structures in the Americas where slavery was preached as the will of God. Slaves were taught to be obedient to their masters and segregated into what were called the "Nigger Balconies." The independent black church was therefore born as an alternative and protest to the racist practices and ecclesiology of the white church. It created the free space where African Americans could worship God in the way they wanted to worship. It was the space where African Americans were affirmed as subjects, not objects. It became the instrument that provided for the social, economic, and political welfare of African Americans.

IT IS THIS HISTORY AND THE CONTINUING PRACTICES AND POLICIES OF LEGITIMATING RACISM THAT REQUIRE THE CHURCH TO COME TO 1992 IN A TRUTH-TELLING, CONFESSIONAL, AND RESISTANCE POSTURE IF NEW HISTORY, NEW BEHAVIOR, AND NEW ACTIONS ARE TO OCCUR.

IT IS THIS HISTORY and the continuing practices and policies of legitimating racism that require the church to come to 1992 in a truth-telling, confessional, and resistance posture if new history, new behavior, and new actions are to occur. The imperative for the church is to stand and confess its faith; to renounce in clear and unambiguous tones the false perceptions of reality; and to resist the vicious circle of destruction of peoples and the Earth.

Lest we forget, I take us back to a moment 22 years ago, in 1969. A prophet by the name of James Foreman walked down the aisle of Riverside Church in New York City and presented the Black Manifesto. This manifesto had emerged out of the Black Economic Development Conference and was directed at the problem of exploitation of African Americans both in the United States and overseas by a racist, white, capitalist America. It demanded from the white Christian churches and Jewish synagogues, as part of the system of domination, $500 million in reparations for education, communications, and economic development.

In addition to walking down the aisle of Riverside Church, Jim Foreman and a group from the Black Economic Development Conference occupied the Inter-Church Center offices of the United Church of Christ, the United Presbyterians, the Methodist Church, the Reformed Church of America, and the office of the National Council of Churches. For this form of truth-telling and witnessing, the denominations responded by requesting an injunction. The courts responded by issuing a temporary restraining order against Foreman.

While the issue of reparations and the manifesto itself divided the church and were the source of heated debate within and among African-American and white Christians, it was Gayraud Wilmore of the then-United Presbyterian Council on Church and Race who struck a prophetic note in a 15-page response to the Black Manifesto:

No institution in American society has made more confession of guilt for its involvement in the sin of slavery and in segregation and discrimination against Black people than has the Christian church. No institution in America has issued more high sounding pronouncements of the principles of a commitment to social justice. If reparations are truly an acceptable form of the concrete form of repentance, then the White Churches of the nation have a religious duty to demonstrate the seriousness and the sincerity of the Christian conscience by repaying to oppressed minorities whatever reasonable portion can be calculated from the benefits which have accrued to them through slavery and Black subjugation.

Whatever one may think of James Foreman's politics and the tactics of disruptive confrontation, the church should recognize that this is not the first time God has called upon the wrath of those outside the church to summon it to repentance and obedience. The great wealth that the churches have accumulated has become a spiritual liability, because rather than help men and women to destroy the dehumanizing, demonic structures that cripple them, it has been used to enhance the welfare of the churches and their members.

The time may be at hand for the cleansing of the temple as our Lord accomplished it. The time may be here, as the scriptures warned, for a judgment to begin in the household of faith. It may well be that for all his vehemence and rudeness, James Foreman is being used by God to declare to the churches: "This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?"

Sisters and brothers, the time is at hand. We cannot continue with business as usual. The threats to life in this nation and around the globe demand from all of us a new way of thinking, acting, and being. It is time for new affirmation and new covenants. A radically new orientation is required; a movement of unity, solidarity, and resistance is required in all parts of the world if we are to pursue a vision of a just peace for all of creation. ■

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AT THE DOOR OF THE CHURCH

THE CHALLENGE TO WHITE AND BLACK PEOPLE OF FAITH

by Catherine Meeks

TOO LITTLE HAS CHANGED! IN SPITE OF the struggles of the past for racial equality, racial freedom, and respect, the basic foundation of racism in the church is alive and well. As a matter of fact, it is thriving in an atmosphere of fear and complacency created by the church's lack of conversion to the message of Jesus.

But this lack of conversion is not a problem that is confined to this era. As we can see from history, Europeans who came to America attempting to escape slavery and religious repression in their homelands did not seem capable of understanding the contradictions underlying their own struggle for freedom, the new system of slavery that they instituted, and their faith. Of course the even deeper irony is that they not only enslaved Africans but they created an ideology regarding Africans and slavery that enabled them to live with minimal guilt.

Through this ideology, Europeans saw the Africans as subhuman and thus inferior. It also allowed them to name their slave ships Justice and Integrity, Gift of God, Brotherhood, John the Baptist, and Jesus without ever consciously facing the absolute evilness of their behavior.

Thus the American church was born in this cultural milieu, created by those Europeans who were fleeing oppression and repression and the Africans whom they were oppressing. The conflict that arose after Africans were converted to the Christianity of the American church led to slave owners having to make it clear to slaves that their conversion did not change their slave status. In fact, ordinances were passed by several northern states stating that Christian conversion was not going to help liberate any African from slavery.

It is not very difficult to understand why there is a black church and a white church in America today, or to realize that this structure will not change in the near future. The religious atmosphere created by the coming together of blacks (who were slaves) and whites (who were masters) tended to negate any possibility of developing the true unity and oneness that scripture proclaims for the church. The agendas of the slaves were vastly different from those of the masters. Unfortunately, conflict over agendas, both stated and unstated, continues to be one of the reasons that blacks and whites do not come together to worship.

The church of the whites continues to support the ideology of white superiority over blacks. Too little effort is being made by whites to become conversant with black culture and blacks' views of the world. The general assumption is that there is nothing worthwhile to be gained from studying black culture. Whites often believe that they can learn as much as they need to know about black culture and worldviews by simply befriending a black person who has a similar worldview and lifestyle.

THE BLACK CHURCH WAS FORCED TO BECOME THE GUARDIAN OF BLACK IDENTITY AND SELF-ESTEEM BECAUSE IT WAS THE ONLY INSTITUTION THAT WAS NOT TOTALLY DESTROYED BY RACISM.

WHITES BOTH INSIDE AND outside the church hold the bulk of economic, political, and social power. Blacks who have any power have taken it in one way or another; it is never viewed as a birthright. The white person will view her power as "right," and the black person will view his as a "gift" or an "accident." The whites' inability to relinquish their power and share it continues to reflect the ideology that blacks are incapable of handling power, that blacks need to be cared for much as one cares for children and pets, and that blacks need to have others broker their power for them.

In the past the slave was seen as a labor provider six days a week. Even Sunday morning religious gatherings were not the expression of equals coming together to worship God. Rather they were gatherings of those who felt superior but condescending enough to allow an inferior to have access to something which would make him or her a better slave. They also served to alleviate some of the masters' guilt about holding persons as slaves in the first place.

The crucial point to remember about these early worship experiences is that the whites were always in control on Sunday, just as they were on every other day.

It was the white control of the worship, the inability to accept blacks as equals, and the negation of black personhood that led to the separation of the black church from the white church and to the emergence of a black religious community.

As early as 1787, Richard Allen and Absolem Jones discovered that the white Methodist church was virtually another slave ship. As a result of this realization, these two men, along with other men and women, founded African Methodism in this country.

This dynamic of the white church's racism and the black church's resistance continues to shape the interactions between these two communities. And so, very little has actually changed!

Paul Peter Piech

The fundamental attitudes of superiority, that whiteness is better than blackness continue to prevail, as is evidenced by the way in which whites with power use it and abuse it. Even in religious communities attempting to strive for some kind of radical adherence to the message of Jesus, there remains a tendency to judge as inferior the ways that blacks operate in the world because they seem inefficient and less productive than the ways of whites.

RACISM CALLS FORTH RESISTANCE! Whites have to accept the responsibility for racism because they continue to have the power and systemic support that is needed to perpetuate it. It cannot be forgotten that prejudice plus power equals racism and that because of that very prejudice blacks are not likely ever to have the power necessary to be true racists. A black person may despise whites, but he will not be the recipient of the same benefits from his prejudice as the white person who bases all of her right to privilege upon the fact that it is her right as a white person. Because she doesn't have to struggle with her prejudice, she can simply allow her view of the world to offer her the necessary tools to accommodate her attitudes and her values.

Blacks, especially black church people, are called to resist. This is partly the result of the historical perspective in the black church that one must not cooperate with evil. Thus the white church can concern itself with the socio-economic issues of its world, while the black church is busy engaging in resistance. Of course the sadness about the state of the black church lies in the fact that it is no less a victim of the culture than its white counterpart, and it is often not about God's business as it should be.

Nonetheless, it seems clear that the inability of whites and blacks to come together as a unified worshiping community has far less to do with diversity in worship styles than has been accepted in the past. The problem lies in the unwillingness of blacks to be treated as children and of whites to share their power.

Another part of the problem has to do with the necessity of blacks to resist racism and to strive for radical redefinitions of the church and its role in their struggle for liberation. Of course this is a part of the process that the Europeans engaged in when they came to the so-called New World in the first place. They were struggling for liberation, and they resisted oppression; therefore, black resistance should not be too difficult for the white church to understand.

The black church was forced to become the guardian of black identity and self-esteem because it was the only institution that was not totally destroyed by racism. However, it is necessary to note that the subtle nature of the new expressions of racism that have emerged out of the experience of integration—which was forced by the laws rather than by the transformation of people—has had a negative impact upon the stability of the black church's role in the development of the black community.

The theology of liberation, a very necessary expression of self-definition, has risen from the black church as yet another response to the call to resistance and has greatly impacted the life of the black religious community. This has made the possibility of unity between the white and black churches an even greater challenge because the white church is often offended by such expressions of power in the black religious community.

In the midst of this reality of separation, how do we as black and white believers in the message of Jesus find a way to respond? First, it is necessary for whites to relinquish their racism. For example, assuming that blacks choose to worship apart from whites because of a different style will no longer suffice. Second, it is necessary for both whites and blacks to decide if scripture, such as the following from the letter to the Galatians, has anything to do with the call of God upon their lives: "There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female; you are all one in Christ Jesus" (3:28).

It is important to reflect upon the possibility that God intends all people who have been created in God's image to learn to respect each other and to treat one another as equals. Those who call themselves Christians will have to learn to share their lives, possessions, and power with one another. As long as we claim that being Jew or Greek, female or male, black or white is a reason for disunity, we remain separate because we protect ourselves from having to face the deeper issues of our woundedness, and we shield ourselves from having to change.

Racism in the church helps whites maintain the status quo and thus maintain a sense of security and control in a world with little security and so few areas that can be controlled. Thus resistance as a stance of the black church offers some security as well for blacks. When one has identified one's enemies and begun to fight them, it can be unsettling to redefine the enemy and one's relationship to that enemy.

Therefore, blacks are challenged—as whites are challenged—to be open to the call for transformation in the church around the issue of race. Whites have no place in which to look for the enemy. Blacks must wait and see if the enemy is making an effort to be transformed, and, if so, the challenge of facing and relating to a transformed enemy must be confronted.

The separation between white and black church people cannot continue to be justified as the way of God. The work of racial healing and reconciliation lies on the doorsteps of the church. ■

CATHERINE MEEKS, a Sojourners contributing editor, is a professor and director of African American studies at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia.

STUDY SESSION 1 / QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Each author in this chapter distinguishes between prejudice and racism. Do you agree with these distinctions? What are the implications of distinguishing between prejudice and racism? How do you define prejudice? How do you define racism?

2. Catherine Meeks states that "blacks are not likely ever to have the power to be true racists." Do you agree with this assessment? Why or why not?

3. Do you believe that racism and Christian faith are incompatible? Why? Do you agree that the thrust of the biblical message is anti-racist? What biblical passages most strongly support such an assertion?

4. The authors of this section issue a strong indictment of the white church for its perpetuation of racism. Do you agree with their assessment? Give some examples from your personal experience.

5. Yvonne Delk, citing colonial expansionism and missionary practices, names the church as a "co-partner" in the system of racist exploitation. In what ways does the church continue to be complicit in the institutionalization of racism? Why has racism played such a prominent role in the history of the U.S. church?

6. Calvin Morris and Catherine Meeks each state that people of good will—white abolitionists and white integrationists—have often inadvertently perpetuated new manifestations of racism. What historical events support this claim? In what ways have you witnessed the truth of this claim? How can this be avoided now?

7. Calvin Morris details the history of legalized racism in the United States. How does information about the impact of legalized racism in this country affect your understanding of U.S. history? How would U.S. history books be different if they included the perspective of people of color? What seems to be the reaction as history books increasingly do offer such different perspectives?

8. The Black Manifesto of 1969 called for financial and structural reparations to be paid to the African-American community. Are such reparations necessary and important? In what ways, if any, has white America begun to pay such reparations to African Americans and American Indians? What other forms could this repayment take?

9. Yvonne Delk calls the church in 1992 to a "truth-telling, confessional, and resistance posture." Share a story from your own experience that demonstrates your participation in racist attitudes and confesses your prejudice.

10. Jim Wallis states that white people need to repent of their racism. What can individuals do in their process of repentance? What can the church do in its process of repentance?

11. Why does Catherine Meeks call the black church to resistance? Do you feel threatened or liberated by this call? Why? How do you respond to the feelings raised by her call?

THE DEEP SCARS *of* DISCRIMINATION

▲ THE WOUNDS OF RACISM ARE inflicted in a variety of ways, both personal and institutional, leaving those targeted as its victims feeling vulnerable to racially motivated violence or systemic oppression. Often the structures of society reflect and re-enforce the personal racism of members of the society.

Racism is manifested in our culture through physical violence, wrenching poverty, status quo legislation, treaty violations, and many other means. It is quite difficult for those who are not the targets of racism—personal or systemic—to recognize the effects or consequences of this injustice. The articles in this session focus on specific areas of society in which racism is especially apparent, demonstrating the profound consequences of such social discrimination.

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TARGET: DEMOCRACY

CONFRONTING RACIAL VIOLENCE

by C.T. Vivian

MORE THAN 20,000 of us gathered in Forsyth County, Georgia, on that brisk morning, January 24, 1987. We had come to set the record straight: Black people can live, eat, and travel where we want to. Jim Crow segregation is dead; I had helped to kill it 20 years ago.

When my turn came to speak, I looked out from the platform and saw that 40 percent of those assembled were white. I saw the rows of police that lined both sides of our parade, and I knew that they were there to protect us. I saw politicians and government officials participating in the civil rights march as ordinary citizens. I turned to Andrew Young and saw a young civil rights activist and minister who had become the mayor of Atlanta. It seemed as if everything had changed.

Yet, one week before, a mob of 600 whites led by fewer than 60 Klansmen had attacked and stopped a "brotherhood" march by 75 whites and blacks on the same ground as we now marched. And when I looked past the police lines protecting us, I saw close to 3,000 hostile white people waving confederate flags, screaming racial epithets, and holding banners proclaiming "Racial Purity is Forsyth's Security." I had seen it dozens of times before: a white mob—men and women, old and young—in a lynching fury.

The white mob was not an aberration out of the past. It was a vivid illustration of the present. During 1986, racist violence was a fact of life: South and North, East and West:

- In Howard Beach, New York, a group of tough white youths attacked a couple of black people who had stopped at a pizza stand in their neighborhood.
- On the University of Alabama campus in Tuscaloosa, a cross was burned in front of a house into which a black sorority was thinking of moving. Two white students were arrested, then released.
- In Forrest City, Arkansas, a black employee of the U.S. Department of Agriculture received a promotion and his home was burned to the ground, with a burned cross discarded nearby. All investigation indicated some of his co-workers were members of the Klan.
- In California, a Walnut Creek synagogue was painted with a swastika; in Westchester an interracial couple was repeatedly harassed; and in Chula Vista, Chicano students were harassed and assaulted after some other Chicano students won election to student government for the first time.
- In Bristol, Connecticut, a bus belonging to the Beulah AME Zion Church was painted with the initials KKK and firebombed.

ALTHOUGH THE FIRST VICTIMS OF RACIST VIOLENCE ARE OFTEN BLACK PEOPLE, THE ULTIMATE VICTIM IS THE DEMOCRATIC PROMISE ITSELF.

- In Chicago hundreds of white youths, led by a small group of Klansmen and neo-Nazis, mobbed a small, interracial group of anti-Klan demonstrators. In Zion, Illinois, a 16-year-old black youth was shot to death at a carnival by a white man screaming "Klan, Klan, Klan."
- In Stoughton, Massachusetts, three white men were charged with beating three Vietnamese immigrants whom police found covered in blood.
- In Toledo, Ohio, four whites were arrested for firing shotguns into the homes of two black families. In Cleveland, a white mob gathered for three days outside the home of a black woman and her three daughters. The family was eventually forced to move.

In hundreds of other incidents, black people and other people of color were threatened, assaulted, and murdered in their homes, their schools, and their places of worship. In most instances the violence was the result of spontaneous activity by people unaffiliated with any white supremacist organization. In other cases the violence was carefully planned by Klansmen or neo-Nazis with definite political objectives.

Recent studies have shown that the surviving victims of racist violence feel brutalized and fearful, isolated from their friends, and unable to fully participate in the life of their community. The same studies show that unreported attacks outnumber reported attacks by a three-to-one ratio.

Some observers believe that we are in the midst of a new upsurge of racist violence. There is some evidence that the incidents in Howard Beach and Forsyth County sparked a spate of imitative attacks around the country. In

addition, white supremacists were unusually active in north Georgia in 1987. But on the whole, there has been no new upsurge in racist activity; instead racist activity has maintained the steadily high levels it reached in the late '70s and early '80s. Since the re-emergence of the Ku Klux Klan in 1977 and 1978, an epidemic of racist violence has plagued our land.

WHEN I LOOK BACK to 1947, when I participated in my first civil rights demonstration, I see a number of important similarities between the racist violence we faced in the past and the violence we face today.

Matt Herron

For example, when we took the movement to Chicago in the mid-'60s, we discovered that the same racist violence existed "up-south" in the streets of Cicero, Illinois, as existed "down-south" in Alabama. It is the same today.

Today, like yesterday, one of the principal results of violence against black people and other minorities is the paralyzing effect it has on the white majority. In many instances, particularly in small towns or close-knit urban communities, fear of retaliation prevents those closest to the violence from publicly opposing it.

White passivity takes other forms as well. In the last 10 years, the concern for civil and human rights has faded from the national agenda. The mean spirit of their neighbors often silences white people of good will. It is in this ocean of passivity and acceptance that the sharks of racist violence swim.

Despite the similarities between then and now, important distinctions exist between the violence we faced more than 20 years ago and the course of racist violence in the last eight years. Even the Klan is different today.

When Sheriff Jim Clark physically denied blacks the right to vote in Selma in 1965, racist violence was used by government officials to protect the status quo. When Police Commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor arranged for Klansmen to assault Freedom Riders in Birmingham in 1961 without interruption, many government officials worked hand-in-glove with Klan groups.

Today, when whites burn school buses used for racial integration or terrorize whole communities, they are trying to change the status quo and end *de jure* desegregation. When members of the Aryan Nations rob armored cars and murder state police officers, they are at war with the same government officials they cooperated with 20 years ago.

THE NEW SHAPE OF the white racist insurgency has been in formation since its emergence in the late-'70s. At first, slick, media-savvy leaders claimed that their groups were "nonviolent, white rights" organizations. Their propaganda was directed primarily against affirmative action and other programs that had grown out of the black freedom movement.

Although the Klan's claim to nonviolence was patently false, it did seem that its growth, and the attending racist violence, was due to a reaction by whites to black gains. In that regard the Klan's rhetoric closely resembled the rhetoric of mainstream politicians and others who inveighed against "reverse racism."

The cross-burnings, arsons, and random shootings perpetrated by Klan members at that time were similar to the hundreds of other acts of racist violence committed by non-members. It looked to me as if the Klan was only the most violent expression of a broad white consensus to undo the gains of the "second Reconstruction" of the '60s, much as the Klan had helped to destroy Reconstruction after the Civil War.

As a result, at an August 1979 meeting in Norfolk, Virginia, the National Anti-Klan Network was formed as an emergency, stopgap measure. We were certain that, after quickly defeating the most violent forms of racism, concern for other issues of racial justice would soon render the Anti-Klan Network obsolete.

However, by 1982 it became apparent that the highly visible white-sheeted Ku Klux Klan was only one part of a larger, stable white insurgency. The Posse Comitatus-type groups in the Midwest, the Aryan Nations in the Northwest, as well as several dozen other factions and sects, formed a single anti-democratic web.

While drawing on the widespread prejudice and institutional privileges of whites endemic to our society, this new insurgency poses its own distinct challenge. Instead of hoping merely to dismantle the civil rights gains and return to the past, this new white supremacist movement wants to overthrow the U.S. government and go forward to a brave "new order."

I didn't completely understand these developments at the time, but by 1984 we began the planning that resulted in changing the name of the Anti-Klan Network to the Center for Democratic Renewal. The new name reflected our new challenge: Although the first victims of racist violence were often black people, the ultimate victim was the democratic promise itself.

In community after community, we found black people afraid to call for an ambulance or police protection when they believed that organized racists had penetrated those services. Issues such as employment discrimination and access to housing are impossible to resolve in an atmosphere poisoned by hate group activity. For black people and other minorities, the new white insurgency means exclusion, physical danger, and possible genocide.

For the blue-collar and middle-class whites who join this insurgency, participation expresses their unhappiness with their present circumstances and their hope for the future. That is a consummate difference from the racist movement of more than 20 years ago, which expressed fear of the future and contentment with the status quo. It is a chilling thought: an anti-democratic, authoritarian "white Christian republic" representing the hopes and aspirations of tens of thousands of other citizens. Even if unsuccessful, as it surely must be, the white supremacist

movement acts as a cancer, destroying the health of the entire body politic.

The change in ultimate goals has been reflected in the fully automatic assault rifles, light anti-tank weapons, claymore land mines, and paramilitary training that have supplanted shotguns and deer rifles mounted on the rear windows of pickup trucks. Unplanned midnight arsons and random shootings have been replaced by careful planning and ideologically chosen targets. Law enforcement officials, judges, media personalities, and others of presumed influence have been added to the list of blacks, Jews, and undocumented workers as appropriate targets. But most disturbing is the "anti-establishment" character of the new goals that has allowed the organized white supremacist movement to develop new constituencies through the use of new strategies.

EVEN IF UNSUCCESSFUL, THE WHITE SUPREMACIST MOVEMENT ACTS AS A CANCER, DESTROYING THE HEALTH OF THE ENTIRE BODY POLITIC.

SOME OF THE MORE VIOLENT sectors of the white supremacist movement believe that only a small terrorist minority is capable of accomplishing its goals. They believe that the overwhelming majority of white Christians are too "de-racinated" (not sufficiently racist) to establish the Aryan Republic.

These hard-core Klansmen and neo-Nazis formed a clandestine network and launched a guerrilla war in order to terrorize the white majority into submission and biologically eliminate their stated enemies. During 1986 and 1987, belated but aggressive action by law enforcement authorities caused severe setbacks for this section of the white supremacist movement.

During the past several years, however, groups with a strategy of building a large constituency for Nazi-esque ideas have continued a slow, steady growth and have developed wider spheres of influence. These groups use political, economic, and religious channels to spread their racist message.

Racists found that they could capitalize on white working people's fears of economic competition from people of color. Similar to the anti-affirmative action campaigns of the late-'70s, they targeted Vietnamese fishers in the Gulf of Mexico and Mexican immigrants. In one instance a Klan group actually built a trade union and conducted a strike in Cedartown, Georgia, primarily around the issue of Mexican immigrant labor.

In the economically distressed farm belt, the organized racist movement enjoyed an unnerving success. Claiming that an "international Jewish conspiracy" was responsible for farm foreclosures, groups with names such as Posse Comitatus, National Agricultural Press Association, and the Farmers Liberation Army honeycombed the Midwest and began to attract new members to the racist movement. Only after 1985 did a concerted effort by farm advocacy groups and religious institutions stem the growth of white supremacists in the Midwest.

In 1984 a collection of Klansmen, neo-Nazis, and Posse Comitatus members formed the so-called Populist Party. The Populist Party, similar to the more widely known Lyndon LaRouche campaign, developed a multiplanked political platform, raised funds, and ran candidates for public office. In 1984 former Olympic pole vault champion Bob Richards was on the Populist ballot in 16 states. During the 1988 campaign, former Republican Congressperson George Hansen (who had only recently been released from jail for tax fraud) considered carrying the Populist banner into the presidential race. With Hansen's decision not to run, former Klan Imperial Wizard and Republican state senator from Louisiana David Duke sought the endorsement of the Populists.

However, the most insidious channel that organized white supremacists have developed is a phoney theology called Christian Identity. Identity believers maintain that white northern Europeans are the Lost Tribes of Israel; Jews are the result of a mating between the devil and Eve; black people and people of color are considered "pre-Adamic," a lower bestial form of humanity; and the United States is the promised land, the site of the final battle between good and evil, or Armageddon.

Christian Identity adherents consider race rather than faith the basis of grace. On its face it appears to be a caricature of itself. But tens of thousands of white Christians have embraced Identity because of its emphasis on scripture and Identity's pseudo-religious wrappings. More than any other single phenomenon, Identity has brought new recruits to the racist movement.

THOUGH THE PROCESS HAS BEEN painful and dangerous, we have uncovered the true nature of racist violence and the white insurgency that motivates it. But what about us? What about the 20,000 of us who stood shoulder-to-shoulder in Forsyth County? My greatest fear is not of Klansmen with automatic rifles. My greatest fear is that our natural tendency to use old concepts to think about new developments may result in our failure to meet the challenge before us.

With the upcoming election, we are faced with the possibility that the recent spate of public attention to racist violence will evaporate under the hot media lights of presidential politics. I am afraid that when a new president is inaugurated, the new white racist insurgency will be mistaken for lingering manifestations of old problems seemingly addressed long ago.

I am afraid that people like myself will seek to increase the criminal sanctions for the arsons and assaults and ignore the tougher battle for the hearts and minds of the American people. I am afraid that we will continue to consider Klansmen and neo-Nazis as extremist kooks, and the racist maraudings of young people as pranks.

But if we have the vision to see racist violence as the most visible manifestation of a deep alienation from the values of democracy and pluralism, and if we have the courage to challenge the white supremacist movement as the most organized expression of that alienation, then we will be able to reach into the depths of racism in places like Forsyth County, Georgia, and Howard Beach, New York, and bring about true conversion. We have done it before, and we can do it again. ■

C.T. VIVIAN is chair of the Center for Democratic Renewal in Atlanta, Georgia, a national clearinghouse for community-based efforts to counter hate group activity.

DOUBLE JEOPARDY

RACISM AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

by Liane Rozzell

Women in almost every culture and segment of society experience violence—from both individuals and institutions—that is directed specifically at them as women. In the United States, women of color—Hispanic, Afro-American, Asian, and Native American—experience violence that is specifically focused against them because of both their race and their gender. When misogynist violence combines with racism, the result is a unique and deadly threat to women of oppressed races.

Throughout the world, and especially in war, rape has been an instrument of racial conquest and oppression. Groups of men from one race have attacked women of races they deemed inferior. The toll has included Jewish women who were raped by German troops, Chinese women raped by Japanese soldiers, Bengali women ravished by Pakistani soldiers, Native American women raped by white settlers, Afro-American women raped and terrorized by the Ku Klux Klan and other groups, and Vietnamese women raped by U.S. soldiers. These systematic attacks on women often included mutilation and murder, and they were part of a general pattern of terrorism against the population involved.

In these cases, the racist underpinnings of the assaults are beyond doubt. The attacks against women represented an extreme humiliation of the race to which they belonged. Women, in the minds of their attackers, were either property to be sabotaged or subhuman because they belonged to an enemy race.

Susan Brownmiller, in her book *Against Our Will*, quotes a Vietnam war veteran who in a panel discussion described the systematic rapes that were conducted by U.S. troops under the pretext of "searching" Vietnamese women. After the veteran described the mutilation and murder of one particular woman, the moderator asked him, "Did the men in your outfit, or when you witnessed these things, did they seem to think it was all right to do anything to the Vietnamese?" The veteran replied, "It wasn't like they were humans....They were a gook or a Commie and it was okay."

The dehumanization of women of other races in the instances mentioned above has been closely linked to use of pornography and pornographic images. Martha Langelan, in an article on the political economy of pornography, notes that:

In Nazi Germany, the Reich targeted Jewish women in pornography as a means of generating anti-Semitism. In Bangladesh, pornographic movies were shown in the Pakistani army camps during the war in 1971, when hundreds of thousands of Bengali women were being systematically raped by Pakistani troops. In the U.S., pornography gave Asian women special treatment during the war in Vietnam.

The "special treatment" Langelan mentions consisted of images that reinforced stereotypes of Asian women as childlike and submissive.

IN THE UNITED STATES, VIOLENCE against women of color has been consistently linked to the dehumanization, lowered status and degrading images forced upon them by racist structures. During slavery, for example, black women were especially vulnerable and were exploited and abused in every conceivable way. White men could assault black women with impunity, and did. No legal concept of the rape of black women existed.

The pattern of exploiting black women did not end with slavery. An anonymous black woman writing in 1912 testifies to the abuse that she and many others

suffered:

I remember very well the first and last work place from which I was dismissed. I lost my place because I refused to let the madam's husband kiss me....I was young then, and newly married, and didn't know then what has been a burden to my mind and heart ever since, that a colored woman's virtue in this part of the country has no protection....I was present at the hearing, and testified on oath to the insult offered me. The white man, of course, denied the charge. The old judge looked up and said: "This court will never take the word of a nigger against the word of a white man."...I believe nearly all white men take, or expect to take, undue liberties with their colored female servants.

Myths and degrading images about Afro-Americans abound, particularly concerning their sexuality. The notions of black sexual savagery and licentiousness grew especially strong during and after Reconstruction, when many whites sought to curtail the political and economic advances free blacks were making.

The myth of the "bad" black woman that emerged after slavery characterized Afro-American women as morally loose and sexually promiscuous; therefore, they were not seen as deserving of respect. Accordingly no social sanctions against assaulting and exploiting them existed. As Gerda Lerner notes in *Black Women in White America*:

A wide range of practices reinforced this myth: the laws against intermarriage; the denial of the title "Miss" or "Mrs." to any black woman;...the refusal to let black women customers try on clothing in stores before making a purchase; the assigning of single toilet facilities to both sexes of Blacks....Black women were very much aware of the interrelatedness of these practices and fought constantly—individually and through their organizations—both the practices and the underlying myth.

IN THE UNITED STATES, 89 PERCENT OF THE MEN EXECUTED FOR RAPE HAVE BEEN BLACK. NOT ONE WHITE MAN HAS EVER BEEN EXECUTED FOR RAPING A BLACK WOMAN.

It was in this climate that the Ku Klux Klan and other groups used rape and lynching as weapons of terror against the black community.

Black men were also victims of this racist sexual mythology, which pictured them as vicious rapists. This characterization served as a general justification for thousands of lynchings. In addition, 89 percent of the men executed for rape in the United States have been black. Not one white man has ever been executed for raping a black woman.

STEREOTYPING OF BLACK, LATIN, AND Asian women continues today, as both pornography and mainstream media regularly present warped portrayals of women of color. Asian women are often characterized as submissive and eager to please men—an image taken advantage of by the illicit traffickers in Asian "mail order" brides. Hispanic women are frequently stereotyped as sultry, passionate, and wanton.

In pornography, the use of slave images reinforces the degradation of women that is common throughout the industry. For example, one writer on pornography noted in 1980 that "a popular Berkeley theater recently featured a pornographic movie titled *Slaves of Love*. Its advertisement portrayed two black women, naked, (kneeling) in chains, and a white man standing over them with a whip." The poster created only scant outcry in the surrounding community.

Few positive images in popular culture can be found to offset these pervasive characterizations. Black women's roles are usually limited to variations on a narrow range of caricatures: the overweight, loyal "mammy" figure (80 percent of the obese women on television are black); the temperamental, emasculating, often matriarchal character; or the sophisticated seductress.

Aside from the psychological damage these images inflict, and the climate they both reflect and create, distortions of the character of women of color obscure the realities of their lives, including the violence they face. For example, black women are 18 times more likely to be victims of rape than are white women. Furthermore, such stereotyping affects the public and institutional response to that violence.

Black and other women of color in the movement to end violence against women attest to the indifference of police and other institutions toward their plight. The experience of the black community in Boston in 1979 is often cited as an example. Eleven Afro-American women were raped and murdered over a period of months. The twelfth victim was white. Only after she was found did the police respond with seminars and films about rape—a good response, but one that by its timing failed to address the needs of the black community.

BUT RAPE, ASSAULT, AND MURDER ARE not the only forms of violence directed specifically at women of color. Sterilization abuse is another insidious example of how the lives of these women have been devalued. Angela Davis discusses it at length in her book *Women, Race, and Class*.

The eugenics movement, with its pseudoscientific theories, encouraged sterilization as a means of controlling populations and "purifying" the human race. "By 1932," Davis writes, "the Eugenics Society could boast that at least 26 states had passed compulsory sterilization laws and that thousands of 'unfit' persons had already been surgically prevented from reproducing."

Davis includes several quotes in which these early proponents of population control reveal the racist underpinnings of their programs. The director of the American Eugenics Society advocated birth control to "prevent the American people from being replaced by an alien or Negro stock, whether it be by immigration or by overly high birth rates among others in this country."

Population control strategies have focused on poor women, particularly poor Native American, black, and Hispanic women. In 1939, the Birth Control Federation of America planned a "Negro Project," saying that "the mass of Negroes, particularly in the South, still breed carelessly and disastrously." It should be noted that these

programs were not designed simply to advocate the right to individual birth control, but instead were a means of controlling specific populations.

Federal and local government programs also actively promoted—and funded—sterilizations among women of color and poor white women. Coercive measures, such as the threat of cutting off welfare payments, have been employed to force women to submit to sterilization.

To this day, the U.S. government continues to fund and promote sterilization for target populations of women. According to Dr. Connie Uri's testimony before a Senate committee, about 24 percent of all Native American women of childbearing age had been surgically rendered infertile by 1976. Furthermore, Davis notes that "43 percent of the women sterilized through federally subsidized programs were black."

The U.S. government has directed sterilization campaigns against Puerto Rican women for decades. By the 1970s more than 35 percent of all Puerto Rican women of childbearing age had been sterilized.

More recently, U.S. Agency for International Development money has funded and promoted sterilizations of Salvadoran women. According to an article by journalist Chris Hedges, 30,000 women were sterilized in El Salvador during 1983. This was the result of both the promotional campaign and of the policy of sterilizing women at hospitals after they give birth. A similar policy has been used in the United States, against Native American women in particular.

Sterilization abuse has been a hidden problem in the United States. The magnitude of the situation is best understood through a comparison. The director of the then Department of Health, Education, and Welfare's Population Affairs Office estimated that the federal government funded between 100,000 and 200,000 sterilizations in 1972. The Nazis, during Hitler's entire reign, performed 250,000 sterilizations under their Hereditary Health Law.

Linda DeGraf

WHATEVER FORM IT TAKES, VIOLENCE against women of color in this society has its own unique deadliness. But the common denominator in the violence experienced by all women is suffering, which knows no boundaries.

Women of different races and economic backgrounds have begun to join together in a movement to end the violence that endangers them all. The women of color who are involved in this movement, however, bear witness to the barriers that hinder such cooperation. Prominent among them is the misunderstanding or ignorance of the particular ways that both individuals and institutions perpetrate violence focused against women of color.

It is clear from the historical and current experiences of women of color that racism is an inextricable factor in this violence. They reject, therefore, analyses that blame only sexism and patriarchal structures for violence against women. The problem of misogynist violence can only be fully addressed when the experiences of all women are incorporated into the perspective of the movement for change. Both racist and anti-women stereotypes and attitudes must be overcome before society can become a safe place for all women. ■

LIANE ROZZELL, former assistant editor at Sojourners, *works in film and video production in Washington, D.C.*

WITH EXTREME PREJUDICE

EVIDENCE AGAINST THE DEATH PENALTY

by Joyce Hollyday

THE U.S. CONSTITUTION TURNED 200 in 1987. For many Americans the milestone was an excuse for jingoistic hoopla. But as the patriots churned out speeches and editorials, and as the "Constitutional Minutes" hit the air-waves, some citizens were not joining the celebration. Some could not forget that our country's founding document granted black Americans the status of property and appraised the value of a black life at three-fifths of a human being.

Two centuries after the founding fathers put pen to parchment and made racism a cornerstone of the nation, the powers-that-be gave a new dose of constitutional legitimation to racial discrimination. On April 22, 1987, the Supreme Court, the nation's ultimate arbiter of justice, turned its back on overwhelming evidence that black lives are still valued at a fraction of white lives. The court ruled 5-4 against Warren McCleskey, a black man from Georgia convicted in 1978 of killing a white police officer during an armed robbery.

'THE WAY IN WHICH WE CHOOSE THOSE WHO WILL DIE REVEALS THE DEPTH OF MORAL COMMITMENT AMONG THE LIVING.'

Hailed by many as "the most important death penalty decision in a decade," the court's ruling in *McCleskey v. Kemp* was a serious blow for death row prisoners and death penalty opponents. A change of one vote would have cast into doubt the death sentences of hundreds of the more than 2,500 prisoners awaiting execution.

Writing in 1985, John Conyers Jr. (D-Mich.), chair of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, pointed out that of the 35,000 people imprisoned for murder, only 1,500—less than 3 percent—had been consigned to death row. The chances of survival depend on countless factors: the inclinations and ambitions of local prosecutors, the skill or incompetence of court-appointed defense attorneys, the whims of juries to impose or not impose the death sentence, the unpredictability of appeals processes, and the defendant's ability to pay for defense counsel. Conyers wrote that the death penalty was "tantamount to a lottery in which life-and-death decisions depend largely on race, income or just bad luck."

McCleskey's defense was based on the contention that capital punishment is applied in a racially discriminatory way. His counsel relied heavily on a statistical study of 2,484 Georgia murder cases by University of Iowa law professor David Baldus. The study concluded that those who kill whites in Georgia are almost 11 times more likely to be sentenced to die than those who kill blacks. Further, the study showed that blacks who killed whites were given the death penalty three times more often than whites who killed whites.

IN REACHING its decision in the McCleskey case, the high court accepted the validity of the Baldus study but said that it nevertheless does not prove that Georgia's laws violate the constitutional guarantee of equal protection. Further, the court stated that McCleskey, who was convicted by a jury of 11 whites and one black, failed to prove discrimination in his particular case. Jack Boger of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, McCleskey's attorney in the case, said that to provide such evidence would have been impossible "short of a confession by the jurors."

Boger explained that he was "extremely disappointed and...quite astounded" at the court's decision. "All the evidence was one-sided and absolutely clear," he said. "We thought that once the facts were conceded, the outcome was virtually inevitable under the Constitution: that death sentences would be vacated."

Boger pointed out that this country has not seen such behavior by the Supreme Court since the late 19th century when it decided *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the infamous "separate but equal" ruling. "The implications [of the McCleskey decision] are very disturbing," he continued. "The court seems to be saying, 'To accept the fact of racial discrimination would undermine our credibility in the criminal justice system. We can't accept the obvious because it may cause us problems elsewhere.'"

Ironically, it was the same argument of racial discrimination in sentencing that led the Supreme Court to strike down the death penalty in 1972. In its landmark *Furman v. Georgia* decision, the court stated that harsher treatment for blacks constituted "cruel and unusual

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punishment." According to David Burke, a South Carolina lawyer, the irony in the McCleskey decision is that the defendant had the solid evidence of discrimination that was merely speculative in Furman's case, but "what [he] didn't have was public opinion."

Writing the court's majority opinion in the McCleskey case, Justice Lewis F. Powell Jr. defended the court's ruling by stating, "Apparent disparities in sentencing are an inevitable part of our criminal justice system." He claimed that the Baldus study shows "at most...a discrepancy that appears to correlate with race." An independent critic pointed out that the correlation between race and death sentences in Georgia is two-and-a-half times as strong as the widely acknowledged correlation between smoking and heart disease.

Powell also stated his concern that, if McCleskey's claim had been upheld, "the irrelevant factor of race easily could be extended to apply to claims based on unexplained discrepancies that correlate to membership in other minority groups, and even to gender."

A SECOND APPEAL in McCleskey's case was brought to the Supreme Court in April 1991. It was based on evidence uncovered by his attorneys just five days before his scheduled execution date. Prosecution documents made available for the first time showed that the prosecution had made a deal with an informant, whose testimony had been used to convict McCleskey.

The Supreme Court again ruled against McCleskey. Two jurors in the original trial said unequivocally that they would not have assented to the death penalty had they known that an informant had been used. They added their voices to a chorus pleading for the life of Warren McCleskey. But in the end, racism and official misconduct sent him to the chair. At 3:13 a.m. on September 25, 1991, Warren McCleskey was electrocuted by the state.

A month after his execution, during a wave of official rhetoric about being "tough on crime," the U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed an "anti-crime" bill. Among its provisions were the addition of more than 50 offenses to the list of those punishable by death and a drastic curtailment of rights of appeal for death-row prisoners. Most crushing for civil rights groups was the defeat of the "Fairness in Sentencing Act," a provision that would have allowed death-sentence appeals on the basis of racial bias.

In the Supreme Court's dissenting opinion in the original McCleskey appeal, then-Justice William J. Brennan Jr. wrote, "It is tempting to pretend that minorities on death row share a fate in no way connected to our own, that our treatment of them sounds no echoes beyond the chambers in which they die....[But] the reverberations of injustice are not so easily confined....The way in which we choose those who will die reveals the depth of moral commitment among the living."

They are words America needs to take to heart. ■

JOYCE HOLLYDAY is associate editor of Sojourners.

A QUESTION OF SURVIVAL

BLACK FARMERS STRUGGLE TO KEEP LAND

by Kathryn J. Waller

WILSON GERALD and his family have run their small farm for more than 50 years. Like many American farm families, the Geralds inherited land from their ancestors. And like many other farmers, they have been able to acquire more acreage over the years by combining hard work with frugality. But they have found it extremely difficult to borrow money through the FmHA.

In 1921 Congress established the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) to provide low-interest loans to farmers who needed capital either to expand and modernize their farming operations, or to meet operating costs until crops were harvested. The specific mandate of the FmHA was to be the "lender of last resort" for farmers unable to obtain loans elsewhere.

CHEATED OUT OF THEIR LAND, BLACK FARMERS ARE BEING DRIVEN ONCE AGAIN TO ROLES OF TENANCY AND SHARECROPPING.

The difference between the Geralds and successful FmHA borrowers is not in the quality of the Geralds' farming—Wilson Gerald holds many 4-H, extension service, and other agricultural awards. The difference is not the success of their farm—with no outside income, the Geralds' diversified farm operation has supported a family of 12. The difference is obvious—the Gerald family is black.

Over the years the emphasis of the FmHA appears to have shifted from "lender of last resort" to "lender of the biased sort." Only 20 percent of all FmHA loans are now earmarked for beginning or minority farmers, and the Reagan administration even tried to cancel these "limited resource loan" allocations. Each year Congress has insisted that the limited resource loans remain available to those in need, only to be thwarted by FmHA county officers who annually return half the funds, claiming to be unable to find suitable borrowers.

Lacking access to credit, and discriminated against by federally funded research and extension services, black farmers have lost their right to equality of competition with their white counterparts. During the last 25 years, blacks have suffered land loss at a rate 2.5 times greater than white farmers. For the most part, they've seen their land gobbled up by rich farmers with large spreads, or by white, land-hungry developers. The beautiful and fertile lowlands of coastal Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, long owned predominately by minority families, have become the playgrounds of the wealthy.

WILSON GERALD is one of the few black landowners left in his county. In North Carolina, his native state, ownership of land by blacks has declined by one-third in the last 20 years, leaving fewer than 5,000 black-owned farms. And yet of all the states that still have a significant number of black-owned farms, North Carolina ranks second only to Mississippi.

In 1982 a report titled "The Decline of Black Farming in America" was released by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. The report indicted the federal government for hastening the loss of black-owned land, calling the situation "a blight on the conscience of the nation." The report made specific recommendations for improvements within the U.S. Department of Agriculture's system, particularly in the Farmers Home Administration. The report concluded that unless present trends are reversed, there will be no more black-owned land in the United States by the year 2000.

In 1964 Wilson Gerald had an opportunity to buy 29 acres from his uncle, thereby enlarging his farm to 49 acres. But FmHA county officials refused to lend him the money, first on the grounds that the appraised value of the land was too high, and second on the basis that the land was not self-draining.

Recalling those troubled times, Gerald said, "I knew them grand rascals would try to cheat me out of that land because some of them wanted it. When I went with the inspectors they showed me how the land was not self-draining. Angels kept me awake all night, but later that night the Lord told me to go and look at the ditch between the properties. I found out that they had been filling the ditch with dirt. The next day I called up a man I'd met who worked in the national FmHA office."

Gerald eventually got a loan through a contact in Washington, D.C., and, by also borrowing small amounts from local friends and relatives, he was able to purchase

his uncle's land. The only white man to lend him money later faced foreclosure himself and Gerald was able to come to his aid.

Gerald is as critical of the Farmers Home Administration as is the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. "If FmHA had been run for the farmers, instead of against the farmers, we wouldn't be getting these problems," he said, adding, "As long as you have businessmen instead of farmers sitting on these county committees, you're going to get...somebody setting up somebody else to lose their land, if that man's a developer and wants that land."

John Spragens Jr.

The U.S. Civil Rights Commission report stated, "The frequent pattern is for land to remain in minority hands only so long as it is economically marginal and then to be acquired by whites when its value begins to increase."

Gerald said, "I was able to save myself. I'm sure FmHA ran a lot of black farmers out of business. Now they are running a lot of the white boys out too....FmHA has loaned a lot of these boys thousands of dollars to buy big equipment and rent big land, then dropped them. What we need...is more people in farming...less people out of jobs and on welfare. It's a good way to make a living, raise a family, and keep a community together. Farmers will have to stick together to get this changed. Nobody will do it for them."

DENIAL OF CREDIT is only one of the discriminatory practices creating the perilous situation facing black landowners today. Restrictive property taxes and inheritance laws serve to cheat black landowners out of "heir" property. Other government agencies also have failed to meet the needs of minority farmers. Funding for predominately black agricultural colleges has been minuscule compared to federal funds allocated to predominately white agricultural colleges. The voluntary northward migration of blacks seeking a less repressive social structure and better employment opportunities has also contributed to the decline of the black farmer.

In Georgia in 1868, during the Reconstruction period, freed slaves suffered disenfranchisement and persecution at the hands of local government officials and other powerful whites. A group of black Georgians formed the Civil and Political Rights Association and met in Albany to petition Congress, addressing grievances and asking for protection.

Qualifying the statement of their condition by saying that their grievances applied not to all whites but only to those disregarding the law, they wrote, "Still we seek not their injury; we seek only our own protection. If this can be afforded us in southwest Georgia, then we are content to remain here and contribute our labor to the development of this country. But judging from the past and the present, protection cannot be afforded to us here; and with feelings similar to those of the Indian as he turns westward from the bones and hunting grounds of his fathers, we ask to be removed to some other land."

TODAY, 120 YEARS later, rural blacks are facing a similar plight. Cheated out of their land, black farmers are being driven once again to roles of tenancy and sharecropping, or they are forced into the degradation of welfare dependency.

Farm advocacy groups are springing up, but as the rural situation deteriorates, they are in need of reinforcement and support. The Emergency Land Fund has successfully lobbied for less restrictive property laws in several Southern states. Financial restraints forced them to merge with the Federation of Southern Co-ops, an organization that works primarily in Alabama and Georgia helping black farmers to develop markets and co-ops. Other groups, including the Rural Advancement Fund, operate hotlines and emergency and educational services to assist small farmers in forming their own support networks.

As Wilson Gerald said, "Farmers will have to stick together to get this changed." The Rural Advancement Fund has found, after almost 50 years of work with beleaguered family farmers, that black landowners can be saved only by combining their efforts with similarly threatened white farmers and that such an alliance must grow quickly to include urban and rural people, all of whom have a stake in diversified land ownership.

In March 1986 the possibilities for such an alliance were witnessed in a small South Carolina town where 2,000 conservative rural people—black, white, and Native American—gathered at a meeting of the fledgling United Farmers Organization to hear Rev. Jesse Jackson speak. Jackson told them, "Unless you work together it's just a matter of time before all of you are driven off your land. You can count on it, if the black farmers go out in the morning, white farmers will follow in the afternoon."

As one white farmer said, "We ain't got no time for racism now. This is survival." ■

KATHRYN J. WALLER is president of the board of RAFI-USA, an international non-profit organization involved in agricultural justice issues.

A LEGACY OF BROKEN PROMISES

AMERICAN INDIAN TREATY RIGHTS ATTACKED IN WISCONSIN

by Sharon Metz

NOT LONG AGO THE WISCONSIN state motto was changed from "Escape to Wisconsin" to "You're Among Friends." To a member of one of the 11 Indian tribes there, however, these words have a peculiar ring. During the past few years, for example, the simple act of "Goin' fishin'"—popular with many people and practiced by the Chippewa before non-Indians came to what is now Wisconsin—has meant putting your life on the line.

Spearfishing stories dominate the Wisconsin media every spring. John Benson, a Chippewa spearer of walleye and muskie, puts his boat in to fish, like 10 generations of spearers before him. More than a thousand people are out this night yelling racial slurs at him. He feels the steel ball bearings shot from wrist rockets hitting him; he hopes that the really big rocks won't.

Benson manages to keep his balance as non-Indians in motorboats try to swamp his fishing craft. Others are dragging anchors through where he is fishing. He knows his family is on the shore, and he can hear people calling them "timber niggers."

He tries not to look at the signs that say "Spear an Indian, Save a Walleye" and "Equal Rights not Treaty Rights." He hopes his children don't notice the effigy of an Indian mounted on a spear, carried like a banner by a bearded non-Indian in a plaid jacket. And he hopes the 200 deputies out that night are enough to keep everyone safe. He doesn't feel that he is "among friends."

Six of the 11 tribes in Wisconsin are Chippewa. In treaty agreements signed in 1837 and 1842, the Chippewa ceded large tracts of land to the federal government, retaining some homelands, called reservations, and retaining the right to hunt, fish, and gather on all lands within the ceded territory. The northern third of Wisconsin, called ceded territory, is covered by these treaties. These rights were upheld by the Supreme Court in 1983 when it was apparent that the state had for years enforced its own laws on the tribes without the jurisdiction to do so. Harvesting fish in the spring by the Chippewa is done by standing up in a boat and spearing them. The fishers spear at night using lights to see the fish, and the catch is then shared among tribal members. Chippewa fishers take approximately 3 percent of the walleye and muskie in Wisconsin each year.

POSTERS ADVERTISING THE "FIRST ANNUAL INDIAN SHOOT" HAVE BEEN FOUND IN LOCAL BARS AND ON BULLETIN BOARDS OF OTHER BUSINESSES.

STOREKEEPERS AND MILL WORKERS, politicians and housewives, northern media editors and school principals deny that racism motivates much of the anti-Indian activity.

They say it is not an issue of racism, that it is the method of fishing or spearing that makes them angry. Others say it is not racism but the economics of tourism that they are concerned about. Still others say it is not racism but the lack of education that is the problem. At least one of the protest groups claims it isn't racism, but that it's a matter of equal rights or, in this case, equal fish for everybody.

Someone once said, "When in Wisconsin you have to understand: There isn't racism north of Highway 29." You don't use the "R" word in northern Wisconsin.

However, Quincy Dadisman, a retired reporter from *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, the state's largest circulation newspaper, says, "When I stood at a boat landing one night and heard the gunshots, and a rock the size of a melon landed between me and the person I was interviewing, I came to recognize racism."

Education, the solution proposed by some, is woefully lacking in Wisconsin in terms of teaching about the culture, history, and sovereignty of Native Americans. Republican Gov. Tommy Thompson vetoed attempts to increase state assistance to Indian community schools from $110 per pupil to $185 per pupil. Such a proposal, the first increase in more than a decade, would cost the state $47,300 annually. The state's surplus as of 1990—the second attempt to pass such legislation—was $329 million.

In 1979 the legislature passed a bill to teach Native American history and culture in the public schools. School boards successfully lobbied to make it a voluntary program, saying that most school boards were concerned and would take advantage of the option. Since that time only four out of 460 school districts opted for the program. Those four were Indian schools. The legislature has now passed a bill to make the program mandatory,

but the funding was cut first from $800,000 to $600,000 and then, through the successful lobbying of a state senator from northern Wisconsin, cut again to $300,000.

School districts in Wisconsin have had several serious racial incidents against Native American students. The Crandon school district had to close two days last year because Indian parents pulled their children from school when pictures, posters, and T-shirts displaying anti-Indian slogans were displayed. In Park Falls a senior told a group of clergy gathered for a prayer service that classmates are going out to "yell at the Indians" for fun on prom night. In Wausau a young Chippewa had his car dismantled after school as classmates yelled racial slurs. He has transferred to live with his grandmother on the reservation.

In 1984 an ad hoc task force of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights held hearings on the reports of escalating racism against Native Americans and issued a report. It found that the racism being exhibited was considerable, widespread, and accepted as a norm by the larger society. In 1989, more hearings were held and the report, issued in February 1990, was even more disturbing.

"TREATY BEER," called "bigot beer" by those who are boycotting it, is a visible symbol of racism. The label displays a fish on a spear and carries the phrase "True brew of the working man." It is being marketed in Washington state, Illinois, and Wisconsin. Two previous boycott attempts were successful, but promoter Dean Crist, a businessperson in the city of Minocqua and leader of the local organization Stop Treaty Abuse (STA), has found a new brewer, Dixie Brewing in New Orleans. The profits from the beer are used to lobby Congress to abrogate the treaties.

Posters advertising the "First Annual Indian Shoot" have been found in local bars and on bulletin boards of other businesses. It allocates points for shooting Indians. "Plain" Indians are worth five points, while Indian trial lawyers are worth 100 points. It is advertised as being open to all taxpaying residents of Wisconsin, with a note that blacks, Hmongs, Cubans, and those on welfare are not eligible.

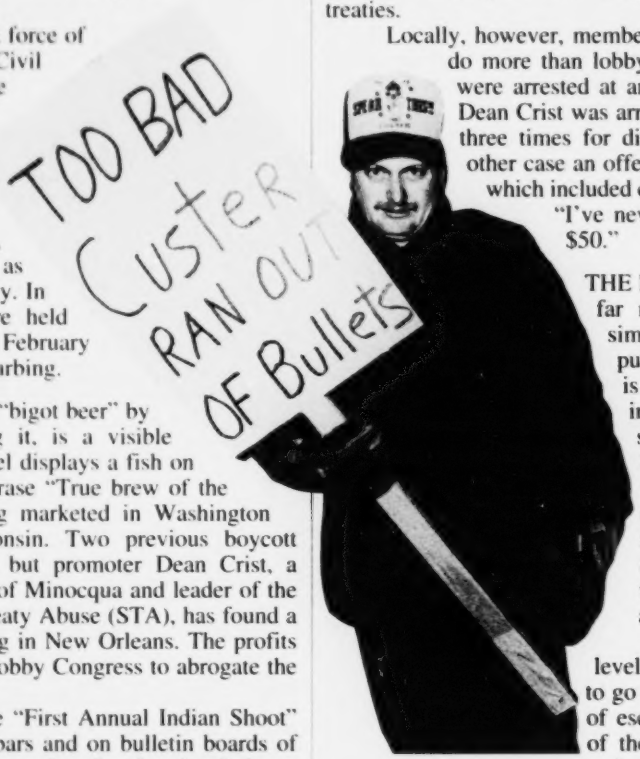
Ed Bearheart, a St. Croix tribal council member, sees all of these issues as an attack on a culture, a way of life. The issue isn't fish, or gambling, or education, or the economy; it is a different perception about what is important and a lack of respect for any culture except the dominant one.

Bearheart says, "The attacks on our sovereignty and treaties are really attacks on our way of life, our way of viewing things. The environment is critical to our being. The same tactics to separate us from our resources and land are being used in Brazil, Alaska, and elsewhere. It's really racism, with many different names and faces."

Crist, one of the primary public forces here, was quoted in *The Wisconsin State Journal* on January 14, 1990, as saying, "You know, I was listening to David Duke [the Klansman elected to Louisiana legislature and Republic gubernatorial and presidential candidate] speak the other day, and he was good, very good....What he was saying was the same stuff we have been saying. It was like he might have been reading it from STA literature." Crist does not heed pleas from law enforcement officials, the governor, area members of Congress, or the area Chambers of Commerce to keep his people away from the boat landings.

A second, less militant group, Protect American Rights and Resources (PARR), just voted to let members use their judgment about protesting at the landings and instead is holding daytime rallies. Both STA and PARR are members of a national anti-treaty umbrella organization in Big Arm, Montana, called Citizens Equal Rights Alliance. Its purpose is to lobby Congress to change the treaties.

Locally, however, members of these organizations do more than lobby. More than 200 people were arrested at anti-treaty rallies in 1989. Dean Crist was arrested six times and fined three times for disorderly conduct. In another case an offender received a $50 fine, which included court costs, and remarked, "I've never had so much fun for $50."



THE ISSUES in Wisconsin are far more complex than the simplified rhetoric of the public debate, and the furor is not about fish. Prevailing attitudes and power structures are being challenged, and politicians are very nervous. Innumerable actors and agendas are present on the stage—a stage that has drawn national and international attention.

Politicians at every level want the "Indian issue" to go away. But after six years of escalating strife, almost all of them realize that it hasn't and won't. Local and state officials blame the federal government for the "Indian problem" here. Federal officials point out that Wisconsin has jurisdiction over certain activities and crimes in Indian country and must solve the problem itself.

In March 1989 every member of the 11-member Wisconsin congressional delegation signed a letter to the Chippewa Tribal Chairs, which said in part, "...members of the congressional delegation will certainly have to take into account the tribes' lack of cooperation and their lack of sensitivity when assessing tribal requests for federal grants and projects." Not surprisingly, the tribes considered this a threat.

The letter was followed by introduction of H.J.R. 261 that would "interpret and implement the provisions of the treaties" in a way that was "more equitable." Actually, passage of H.J.R 261 would cut the Chippewa fish harvest by 90 percent.

While Congress has the power to abrogate treaties unilaterally, precedent and simple decency have so far precluded it from doing so. Notwithstanding that, Rep. James Sensennbrenner (R-Wis.), at the urging of local officials, introduced legislation to abrogate the off-

reservation hunting, fishing, and gathering rights of all Indian tribes in Wisconsin.

Sen. Daniel Inouye, chair of the Senate Select Committee on Indian Affairs, recently came to Wisconsin at the invitation of the governor to help negotiate a settlement and restore peace. Inouye suggested that former Washington state governor Daniel Evans be appointed by the president to be a federal observer at the boat landings this spring. STA opposes Evans because of his involvement in peaceful conflict resolution after similar situations occurred in Washington over fishing rights.

Inouye also commissioned an independent report of the situation by two University of Wisconsin-Madison law professors, both experts in American Indian law and history. That report, released on April 23, 1990, criticized Gov. Tommy Thompson for fueling the treaty rights conflict by repeatedly saying "he sees no sign of racism in the protests of northern Wisconsin."

The report cites several examples of racism within the anti-treaty movement and states that Thompson's frequent meetings with the leadership of STA and PARR give them legitimacy. Thompson's April 24 phone call to STA leader Dean Crist, for example, caused Crist to call off a planned civil disobedience action when Thompson promised to fly to Washington, D.C., to meet with Inouye and present the protesters' case.

Thompson, up for re-election this year, has been trying to stamp out brush fires on this issue for the last three years. During his election campaign in 1986, he even made his opposition to the treaties part of his platform. Now, as the courts determine how the rights will be exercised and resources divided, the governor has urged the protesters not to do anything that "might be interpreted as racist, because it could hinder our court case."

"Crisis management" is the best way to describe the approach of both the Republican governor and the legislature, which is controlled by Democrats. To say there is no consistent, comprehensive, positive policy on how to work with the tribes in Wisconsin would be an understatement. Official recognition of tribal sovereignty has not even entered the discussion.

Meanwhile, northern county officials prompted the Wisconsin Counties Association to organize a meeting in Salt Lake City in February, with delegations of county officials from other states that had "Indian problems." The stated purpose of the meeting was to form a coalition of states whose county delegations would press Congress to "modify" the treaties. Thompson sent his representative, Exxon lobbyist-on-leave James Klauser, ostensibly to "listen and learn."

When the tribes learned of the meeting, Indians from 10 different states picketed the site, the Montana delegation walked out, the Utah governor repudiated the meeting, and great turmoil erupted over who would and would not be seated. A subsequent meeting in Salt Lake City, attended by 25 tribes from around the country, resulted in a mutual aid pact between the tribes against efforts to erode treaty rights.

THE ISSUE GENERATING THE MOST concern in this Wisconsin standoff is who controls the natural resources, both on the reservations and on the lands ceded by treaty—and not just Chippewa treaties but others as well. There is a behind-the-scenes battle going on over management and access to mineral rights, timber rights, water rights, and fish and game rights. Corporate interests seem to be a major factor in the controversy, with the treaty issues being used as a means of getting at the resources.

Exxon, Kennecott, Amax, Kerr-McGee, Chevron, Amoco, and Western Nuclear have leased more than 500,000 acres in northern Wisconsin alone, where uranium, copper, and zinc lie just below the surface on many reservation or ceded lands. Kennecott's proposed open-pit copper mine on the Flambeau River in Wisconsin, for example, and the state's effort to lease the treaty rights, seem like more than coincidental occurrences to many.

In 1985 an alliance of environmentalists and Indians prompted Exxon to delay plans to open a mine after the Sokoakan Chippewa band asserted that Exxon fencing of land promised to them in an 1854 treaty was illegal occupation and interfered with their fishing, gathering of wild rice, and trapping. The companies are not unaware that courts have consistently found that treaty Indians have an "environmental right to fishing habitat."

One local government, in an effort to stop a mining project in its community in northern Wisconsin, passed a moratorium against mining, only to be overruled in court. For environmentalists, it seems that the treaties may be the best tool for saving the resources.

The designated guardian of the resources, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR)—also cited in the Inouye report for contributing to the crisis—has not gained the trust of environmentalists or the tribes. At a conference attended by tribes, legislators, environmentalists, and DNR officials, personnel from the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission in Washington presented their story of how the fisheries there have been improved through a "co-management" arrangement.

Frank Boyle, one of the Wisconsin legislators to visit Washington to see the program firsthand, and a few others are strong advocates for co-management. However, George Meyer of the DNR states flatly, "Wisconsin will never agree to co-management. Cooperative management, coordinated management, perhaps, but co-management...never."

Timber interests, with strong ties to the lumber and paper industry, also have a vested interest in co-management. The Wisconsin paper industry, which uses tons of pulpwood from the forests, is one of the largest in the world. If the tribes have a say in timber management and, under the next phase of court allocations, are allowed to harvest timber on the public lands in northern Wisconsin, it will mean not only a sharing of resources for the companies but a different philosophy of forest management.

The Menominee Tribe, not covered under the Chippewa treaties, has already proven its ability to manage its timber resources well and in an environmentally sound way. If the Chippewa begin timbering, and co-management practices are used, the northern counties will feel the impact. Huge tracts of county forest land there are now leased to logging companies and paper mills for a substantial profit.

The difference in philosophy over resource management is evident. Tribes want to preserve the resources for future generations, while the U.S. Forest Service and the DNR have been more responsive to the economics of the

timber and tourist interests. A logger that I met in a coffee shop one day said, "You think there's trouble now. This will look like a Sunday school picnic [by comparison] if the Indians start logging."

THE SIX CHIPPEWA TRIBES are the most visible targets of the latest round of "Indian bashing" in the state. Located on six reservations in northern Wisconsin, each governs itself. Their economics and relationships with their non-Indian neighbors vary. In most tribes there are two factions, a tribal council or governing body, and an opposition group—quite similar to political parties in non-Indian politics

The Lac du Flambeau Tribe, which does the most spearing and attracts the most attention, is very divided. There is a split between Tom Maulson, the most prominent spearer in Wisconsin, and the Lac du Flambeau tribal council. Maulson and a treaty support group called Wa-Swa-Gon helped defeat a "lease-out" agreement that was negotiated and favored by the tribal council.

POLITICIANS AT EVERY LEVEL WANT THE "INDIAN ISSUE" TO GO AWAY. BUT AFTER SIX YEARS OF ESCALATING STRIFE, ALMOST ALL OF THEM REALIZE THAT IT HASN'T AND WON'T.

The Attorney General of Wisconsin, on behalf of the state, had spent months negotiating the lease-out with the Lac du Flambeau band of Chippewa. The settlement would have given the Lac du Flambeau about $10 million in economic development provisions, a new school, and individual per capita payments for a 10-year period of time. In return the tribe would agree not to exercise its treaty rights for 10 years.

This "lease of rights" provision, voted down in October 1989 at the tribal referendum, is a new wrinkle in negotiations by the state. Previously, some "selling of rights" measures were suggested to another tribe. The issue was clouded by confusion over the actual terminology, and the Mole Lake Band of Chippewa voted that proposal down in 1988. State legislators have threatened to withhold state assistance for Indian programs if the Chippewa do not negotiate "in good faith."

The two tribal factions are again in disagreement over the policy of inviting supporters—people who would counter the anti-Indian demonstrators—to the boat landings. Mike Allen, tribal chair of the Lac du Flambeau, has, along with other Chippewa chairs, the governor, members of Congress, Chambers of Commerce, and law enforcement officials, urged everyone to stay away—including supporters. Tom Maulson, who it was rumored last year had a $30,000 bounty placed on his head by supporters of STA, wants supporters to come to the landings. This year he was warned to wear a bulletproof vest.

More than 50 treaty support groups—local, regional, and national—have sprung up. Some are Indian, some are basically non-Indian. They have different ways of showing support for the treaties, ranging from producing educational materials, witnessing at the landings, running radio ads, holding prayer vigils, conducting letter-writing campaigns, doing public education about treaties, and sponsoring forums, rallies, and marches.

HONOR (Honor Our Neighbors' Origins and Rights), Midwest Treaty Support Network, Wa-Swa-Gon, Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, Madison Treaty Support Group, and Witness for Nonviolence are some of the major actors centered in Wisconsin. The American Indian Movement (AIM) from Minnesota and the Indian Treaty Support Committee from Chicago also have a significant presence in Wisconsin. Some groups take their cue from tribal governments, others are "movement people" who respond to needs as they see them. The groups have signed an accord to be mutually supportive and not be divided as they all support honoring the treaties.

Churches too are getting involved. Walt Bresette, a Red Cliff Chippewa activist and lecturer quipped, "Things are so bad in the north that Unitarians are burning question marks on their lawns."

Both the Wisconsin Conference of Churches and the Wisconsin Catholic Conference have issued statements that recognize the legal status of the treaties, oppose the violence, and call for peace. Bishops and judicatory leaders of most major denominations wrote a joint pastoral letter denouncing the racism and calling for peace at the boat landings.

Some parishioners, especially those in the north, are angry that their pastors and bishops are getting involved, but Episcopal Bishop William Wantland of Eau Claire, himself a Seminole Indian, says, "Justice is always a concern of the religious community, and this is a matter of justice." Some pastors who can be removed by a vote of their congregation feel threatened. One minister said, "Look, the big givers in my church are PARR members, and [I feel] I must say I agree with them." At an ecumenical retreat for religious leaders in December 1989, treaties and sovereignty were the number-one issues.

Joe Bresette, a Red Cliff Chippewa and executive director of the Great Lakes Indian Tribal Council, says, "I don't know who is in charge of the moral attitudes in this country, but someone needs to address how people act."

For the first time in the spring of 1990, the Chambers of Commerce of northern Wisconsin spoke out. Eleven chambers issued a statement recognizing treaties and asking people to stay away from boat landings.

But that does not mean the future is bright. According to Bob Deer, member of the Menominee tribal legislature, another issue of tribal jurisdiction that looms on the horizon is over the navigable waters within the Menominee reservation boundaries. He says, "The state simply does not respect the sovereignty of the tribes. The animosity generated over the spearfishing of the Chippewa has threatened the treaty rights of all tribes because of negative attitudes at the highest levels of state government."

The uneasiness all the tribes feel is quite understandable. The ever-present bargaining table has been for centuries the place where more rights are given up, sold, or—using the new wording—"leased." ■

SHARON METZ is executive director and board president of HONOR, Inc., and a former Wisconsin state legislator.

EXILE ON MAIN STREET

THE VULNERABILITY OF ASYLUM SEEKERS IN THE UNITED STATES

by Bill Frelick

You see it in the face of a child that looks twice her age. "Rebeca" sits in the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service's (INS) detention center for unaccompanied children in Los Fresnos, Texas. A researcher from the University of Houston has been given permission to interview refugee children to determine if they are suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, a severe and long-term anxiety reaction characterized by nightmares, flashbacks, and emotional numbing that was brought home to Americans by Vietnam vets. Rebeca, a teen-ager from the Salvadoran countryside, has much in common with those vets—she shares the same nightmares.

Her story, the refugee story, begins with the loss of her home. It was destroyed in 1983 by a bomb that killed two of her brothers. For several years they managed to stay on their plot of land. But the threats—and the killings—mounted until that was no longer possible. Rebeca and members of her family were severely beaten three times by armed men who accused them of supporting the other side in the civil war. She became pregnant by a soldier in 1987. Shortly afterward he was killed. Rebeca's father, mother, and four cousins were killed as well.

The surviving children, under constant threat and harassment, were finally forced to flee their farm in 1990. Rebeca and her brother decided to flee El Salvador altogether. They thought he would be safe from forced recruitment into the army and that she would be able to earn money to support her baby.

But the trauma did not end at the Salvadoran border. A smuggler robbed and abandoned them in Mexico. They were left hungry and ill. Then the *federales* arrested them and took what money was left. They were brought to a house where Rebeca was separated from her brother. That night the men raped her. The following day she escaped. A month after leaving El Salvador, in June 1990, Rebeca made it to the United States, but not to freedom. After crossing the U.S. border at Brownsville, Texas, she was caught at a border patrol checkpoint and put into INS detention.

THE POEM AT THE FOOT OF the Statue of Liberty calls her the Mother of Exiles, who shines a beacon of welcome and beckons, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free." And America has shown generosity to refugees from many places, admitting nearly 1.5 million since 1975. But the welcome has been uneven. Open arms to some, a cold shoulder for the rest.

AMERICA HAS SHOWN GENEROSITY TO REFUGEES FROM MANY PLACES, ADMITTING NEARLY 1.5 MILLION SINCE 1975. BUT THE WELCOME HAS BEEN UNEVEN. OPEN ARMS TO SOME, A COLD SHOULDER FOR THE REST.

More than two-thirds of all refugee admissions have come from Southeast Asia, and most of the rest from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. That leaves about 9 percent of the remaining U.S. refugee admissions divided between Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, and South Asia—regions that represent more than 90 percent of the 16.7 million refugees in the world today.

When it comes to refugees from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Haiti—all countries wracked by persecution and violence throughout the '80s—the U.S. reception has been downright icy. From 1982 through 1991, the United States did not admit a single Haitian or Guatemalan as a refugee. With the exception of a group of 93 Salvadoran political prisoners who were admitted directly from El Salvador in 1984, only 60 Salvadorans have been admitted from 1982 through 1991.

Without a means of entering legally as refugees, tens of thousands of Central Americans and Haitians have attempted to enter the United States without permission. If caught, they are subject to detention and deportation. However, international and U.S. law prohibit the return of refugees to countries where their lives or freedom would be threatened, and people claiming a fear of persecution in their home country have the right to apply for asylum once they are in the United States. Still, 97.2 percent of the Salvadorans who applied for political asylum with INS in the years 1983-1991 were denied. It's been even worse for Guatemalans and Haitians. In 1989 and 1990, the United States forcibly returned 7,850 Salvadorans,

7,430 Haitians, and 6,434 Guatemalans to their home countries.

INS officials have often stated that they regard Central Americans and Haitians as economic migrants, not refugees, drawn here by the lure of American jobs, and not having genuine fears of persecution in their respective homelands. But a 1987 study by the U.S. government's General Accounting Office (GAO) showed that even among asylum seekers making specific claims of having been tortured or similarly persecuted, INS overwhelmingly rejected the Central American claims.

Rick Reinhard

The GAO report compared asylum approval rates for applicants from four countries—Poland, Nicaragua, Iran, and El Salvador—who stated that they were arrested, imprisoned, had their life threatened, or were tortured. Among asylum seekers making such claims, the approval rates were: Iranians, 64 percent; Poles, 55 percent; Nicaraguans, 7 percent; and Salvadorans, 3 percent.

Immigration judges and INS asylum officers may question whether the persecution is real. But psychologists who encounter these refugees know the trauma is real. Rebeca was interviewed as part of a study focusing on a group of 133 Central American youths in INS detention. Each one was asked to identify events that they had experienced, such as sexual assault, hunger, homelessness, seeing a family member or friend killed. The 133 children interviewed reported, on average, having experienced four of the traumatic events in their country of origin, and nearly all of them also reported traumatic experiences during the journey north.

UNDOCUMENTED CENTRAL AMERICANS NEED help, but America rarely offers a place to turn. They have entered a strange world ill-equipped to cope. Usually congregating in urban centers in contrast to their own rural backgrounds, they are exploited by below-minimum-wage jobs and slum landlords, confronted by crime and poverty, and feel trapped by the barriers of language, culture, finances, and fear of discovery and deportation. Far from providing support, small clusters of family and friends usually cram together into tinderbox apartments where their anxiety and confusion build on each other.

The undocumented who are caught seldom understand that they have rights. After all, they had none in their home countries; their frame of reference for authority figures is fear. Although they have a right to a lawyer, they often do not know of this right; nor if they knew, could they afford one, since aliens—unlike citizens facing criminal charges—do not have a right to a court-appointed attorney when they go before an immigration judge.

The treatment of asylum seekers in INS detention has successfully been challenged in the courts, greatly improving the prospects for Central Americans. First, in *Orantes Hernandez v. Thornburgh*, a class action suit decided by a federal court in November 1990, Salvadorans in detention challenged INS for preventing them from applying for asylum. The court found "overwhelming" evidence that "INS agents coerced Salvadorans who had not expressed a desire to return to El Salvador to sign Form I-274 for voluntary departure."

INS agents, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals found, would routinely fill out the voluntary departure forms, even when Salvadorans said they feared persecution upon return. Among the cases that came to the court's attention was that of Maria Santo Madril, an illiterate Salvadoran, who after several days in detention, was given a voluntary departure form and told, "Sign here." She said she would not sign for her deportation. At that point, the INS agent grabbed her hand and physically forced her to make an "X" as her signature on the I-274 form.

The court has now ordered INS to inform Salvadorans of their right to asylum and to be represented by counsel at their own expense. However, the lists provided to detainees of low-cost or free legal services are still mostly useless. The Minnesota Lawyers Committee recently took the trouble of calling the 16 phone numbers INS gives to detainees at the Krome detention center in Florida. Only three were willing to provide free legal services to qualifying Haitians (the majority population at Krome).

Class action suits have successfully challenged other illegal INS practices. For example, in August 1991, a federal appeals court ruled that it is unconstitutional for INS to detain juveniles like Rebeca whose adult relatives have not come forward to claim them. The policy, which arose in 1984, was criticized for using children as bait to force undocumented parents to turn themselves in. The case, *Flores v. Meese*, was filed in 1985 to challenge this practice as well as the conditions of detention in which the children were being held.

The decision, six years later, sets important precedents not only for the rights of non-citizens, but also for those of children. The court held not only that "aliens have a fundamental right to be free from government detention unless...such detention furthers a significant government interest," but also that "government confinement of a child to an institution should be as last resort." The Supreme Court has agreed, however, to hear the government's appeal of the decision.

The courts have not been the only battleground for challenging INS practices. Members of Congress have also sharply criticized the treatment of Central American and Haitian asylum seekers during the past decade. One of them, Joe Moakley of Massachusetts, took the lead in passing legislation in late 1990 that prevented INS from deporting Salvadorans for 18 months. Although more than 180,000 Salvadorans registered for this temporary protected status, it wasn't easy. Registration fees presented an almost insurmountable hurdle for many Salvadorans, 60 to 80 percent of whom INS itself estimates have incomes below public welfare poverty guidelines.

ALTHOUGH WELCOME, TEMPORARY SAFE haven is not asylum; it has no permanence. In fact, Congress

stipulated that Salvadorans who registered for the protected status would be placed in deportation proceedings as soon as the moratorium ended. However, another class action suit came to the rescue. *American Baptist Churches v. Thornburgh* had actually been slowly ripening in the courts since 1985, but came to fruition at just the right time.

The suit, which charged that INS was fundamentally biased against Salvadoran and Guatemalan asylum seekers throughout the '80s, was given a big boost by the new Salvadoran safe haven law. On the heels of that legislative victory, INS agreed to a settlement that would allow all Salvadorans and Guatemalans who were then present in the United States to have completely new asylum hearings. Now, when time runs out on their temporary protected status (it has been extended on a more ad hoc basis through June 1993), Salvadorans will have another chance at permanent asylum.

But what is to prevent a repeat of the old bias? For starters, the Baptist churches settlement required INS to agree that "foreign policy and border enforcement considerations,...the fact that an individual is from a country whose government the United States supports,...[and] whether or not the United States agrees with the political or ideological beliefs of the individual...[are] not relevant to the determination of whether an applicant has a well-founded fear of persecution."

Also, INS itself has undergone some important structural changes. As a result of years of protests and legal challenges, INS has taken asylum adjudication out of the hands of local INS district directors and created a corps of specially trained asylum officers. INS has hired fresh new faces and has included representatives from groups like Amnesty International in their training. The jury is still out on whether the new system will be fairer. But there are genuine grounds for hope.

Still, the very reforms in the way INS operates within the United States appear to be creating pressures to bolster INS police efforts outside our country—interdiction—in order to keep potential asylum seekers at bay. If they can't get here, they'll never have an opportunity to register refugee claims under a reformed system.

INTERDICTION POLICIES HAVE BEEN with us for some time. The term "interdiction" has long been applied to the Coast Guard net off the coast of Florida. There, for the past decade, boats carrying Haitians have been stopped and sunk, their passengers forced aboard Coast Guard cutters and taken directly back to Haiti. During the trip back, INS examiners conducted perfunctory interviews supposedly to determine if any had asylum claims. But the fact that only 28 Haitians were brought to the United States to pursue asylum claims out of a total of 24,559 who were interdicted between the beginning of the interdiction program in 1981 and the overthrow of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in September 1991 suggests how little genuine interest the U.S. authorities had in identifying refugees.

U.S. policy with respect to the Haitians underwent several important changes in the aftermath of the September 30 military coup and ensuing reign of terror. Under pressure of court orders, the U.S. government created a refugee camp at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, where interdicted Haitians were held and given "pre-asylum screening" to determine whether they had a "credible" basis for an asylum claim. During the period from October 1991 to the end of May 1992, when "pre-screening" hearings were being conducted, 9,898 Haitians were "screened in" as having credible claims, of whom 7,068 were brought to the United States to pursue their claims in full-scale asylum hearings.

But on May 24, 1992, President Bush issued an executive order that dropped screening entirely. The president directed the Coast Guard to summarily return interdicted Haitians with no screening whatsoever.

The May 24 policy, on its face, appeared to be a blatant violation of domestic and international law. Article 33 of the Refugee Convention and Protocol, to which the United States is a contracting party, prohibits the "return [of] a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened." The U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act has a similar provision.

The Bush administration argued before the U.S. Supreme Court that "Article 33(1) is simply inapplicable in this case....Article 33(1) only applies to refugees within the territory of the contracting State." In other words, the U.S. government said that it reserved the right to go out into international waters, take refugees with a well-founded fear of persecution into its custody, and return them to their persecutors.

U.S. District Judge Sterling Johnson wrote in his opinion that "it is unconscionable that the United States should accede to the Protocol and later claim not to be bound by it. This court is astonished that the United States would return Haitians to the jaws of political persecution, terror, death and uncertainty when it was contracted not to do so." Despite saying that the U.S. policy made a "cruel hoax" of Article 33 and was "not worth the paper it is printed on," Judge Johnson felt constrained to side with the government.

Although, as of this writing, the issue is still pending in the courts and in Congress, important—and dangerous—precedents are being set. The government is operating to prevent refugees from seeking asylum not only in the seas between Haiti and Florida, but in other spheres as well, operating with impunity outside the reach of our legal system in large part because of the victories that have been won in defending asylum seekers within our borders.

At U.S. diplomatic posts throughout the world, consular officers wield a rubber stamp with the words "Application Received." These two words stamped into a person's passport tell other consular officers anywhere else in the world that the person holding the passport was denied a visa. This closes off a critical avenue of escape for thousands of would-be refugees from the Middle East, Africa, or Latin America. They are effectively "interdicted" before they even board a plane.

Only a minuscule fraction of these Third World people would ever learn that the United States even has a refugee admissions program, and far fewer would ever gain access to it. Not having a way to be admitted officially as refugees, some asylum seekers attempt to fly to the United States or another safe country and there ask for asylum. But they are poor risks for a visa. Visas are given to people with strong ties to their home country,

showing they will return. A refugee, fearing persecution at the hands of this government, can hardly make the case that he is likely to return.

WHILE THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IS directly implicated in the sea and air interdictions, its involvement in interdiction on land—in Mexico—is better hidden. Mexican immigration, military, and police authorities are stopping hundreds of Central Americans every day as they journey northward. In the process of detaining and deporting them, abuses also occur. Refugees tell the names of the worst jails and checkpoints over and over: Ciudad Hidalgo, Tapachula, El Manguito, La Ventosa, Tehuantepec—places in the remote south of Mexico rarely accessible to the press or human rights groups.

Last year in Mexico, I met "Lucia," a Red Cross worker who fled El Salvador in 1990 after she and her husband were anonymously denounced to the army. Their first encounter with the local, uniformed, Mexican police was resolved with a bribe. But shortly thereafter a group of men with machetes raped her and robbed and severely beat her and her husband. A Mexican family found and protected them, putting the couple on a northbound train when their wounds were sufficiently healed. In the middle of the night, the train was stopped by *federales* who, supposedly searching for drugs, robbed all Central Americans aboard of their money and watches and took about 50 of them off the train. Lucia saw one man being kicked in the genitals and another whose head was broken open.

But Lucia and her husband were not arrested at that time and continued north. After arriving in Mexico City, Lucia's husband found a job that did not require papers, but he was caught by the *federales* along with some of his co-workers. Some were held for bribes; others, like Lucia's husband, were not heard from again.

Few of the Central Americans have any idea who apprehends them. Some of the officials, such as the federal judicial police, operate in plainclothes. It is common to see uniformed and non-uniformed men mixed together driving around the border states in pick-up trucks.

But if the undocumented Central Americans wind up in the hands of the Mexican counterpart to INS, *Servicios Migratorios*, their ultimate fate will be deportation. Since 1988, well over 200,000 people caught in Mexico were deported to Guatemala.

In June 1989, before Americans were particularly aware of interdiction in Mexico and before INS was sensitive about criticism of its promotion of stepped-up Mexican enforcement efforts, the INS newsletter, *Commissioner's Communique*, carried a story praising its own "cooperation with the Government of Mexico to stem the flow of Central American migrants through that country, including the establishment of checkpoints along transit corridors and the deportation of intercepted Central Americans."

INS officials have been openly involved in sharing intelligence and training with their Mexican counterparts since the beginning of 1989. And in February 1991 INS Commissioner Gene McNary asked for, and received, permission from the congressional appropriations committees to send *Servicios Migratorios* up to $350,000 from the INS budget to fund Mexico's deportations of third country nationals in 1991.

Although officially for plane tickets, the money has already made a noticeable difference on the ground. New *Servicios Migratorios* vans are popping up along Mexico's southern border. And recent Central American arrivals are saying that it is harder to bribe their way north. "Alicia," a Salvadoran woman interviewed in mid-1991 at an INS-contracted detention center in Laredo, Texas, told a paralegal:

I got caught at the checkpoint at La Ventosa. I was detained three days there. Then I was deported to Talisman [Guatemala]. I asked the authorities, "Why do you work so hard to deport us? I'll give you some money, only don't deport me." The immigration agent answered, "No, because the U.S. is paying us to do this." He meant, to stop any illegals from entering Mexico.

97.2 PERCENT OF THE SALVADORANS WHO APPLIED FOR POLITICAL ASYLUM WITH INS IN THE YEARS 1983-1991 WERE DENIED; AND IT'S BEEN EVEN WORSE FOR GUATEMALANS AND HAITIANS.

The policy has paid off for the United States. Although apprehensions of Mexican migrants at the U.S.-Mexican border continue to soar—Mexicans are not stopped by the Mexican authorities—the number of Central Americans apprehended crossing into the United States has fallen sharply.

The policy, after all, makes sense. The border between Mexico and the United States is 2,000 miles long and porous, whereas Mexico's southern border with Guatemala is only 500 miles long and the few roads leading north are easy to police.

Southern Mexico is also much more remote to the U.S. public than our own border, and the U.S. involvement less clear. Unlike Haitian interdiction, which directly involves the U.S. Coast Guard and INS, the U.S. government has found in Mexico the added benefit of an ally willing to do its dirty work. Central American deportations have escalated at the same time as the development of a closer relationship between the U.S. and Mexican governments. As this closer relationship has evolved, a largely silent, but well understood, *quid pro quo* has emerged—Mexico agrees to keep Central Americans out of the United States, and the United States, in turn, agrees to forgive debts and work toward a free trade agreement.

A remarkable network of sanctuary workers, refugee rights advocates, social service providers, and lawyers has risen to the defense of Central Americans and Haitians within the United States. And the safety net this loose coalition has constructed is beginning to work. But it can only catch those refugees who are already here. Those outside are either trapped in the very countries that persecute them, unable to escape, or are in a free fall, with nothing to back them up. ■

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STUDY SESSION 2 / QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Before reading these articles, were you aware of the extent and nature of racial violence experienced by minority people? How has your understanding of racial violence changed? Why is violence against minority people still such a part of life in the United States?

2. Are there hate groups in your area like the ones mentioned by C.T. Vivian? Have you ever been approached or recruited by members of such groups? Who is involved in them, and how do they try to recruit new members? What are some steps that your church and other churches in your area can take to counter the message of these hate groups?

3. The articles by Liane Rozzell and Joyce Hollyday present a picture of government-sanctioned violence. Do you believe that the U.S. government condones discriminatory violence? How does the evidence they present change your views?

4. The articles by Sharon Metz and Bill Frelick look at ways that the government is involved in perpetuating racism. In addition to the examples mentioned, are there other actions the federal or local government has taken that have perpetuated racism?

5. What are some ways that a person's race, class, and gender affect the way society treats them?

6. Kathryn J. Waller suggests that the economic system benefits some, but is stacked against people of color. What are some examples that support or contradict her assessment? Do you think changes are needed in the economic system to ensure that minority persons are not discriminated against? Why or why not?

7. What is your assessment of the role of the economy in enforcing racism? In what ways does racism benefit or hurt the U.S. economic system? How should the economic system be structured to ensure that poor people and people of color are not oppressed?

8. Often white supremacy groups try to pit working-class and poor white people against working-class and poor people of color. What can be done in your community to bring working-class and poor people from different racial groups together in a common strategy for justice? How could you and your church enable this interaction to occur?

9. Have you ever suffered any violence that was racially motivated? How has this experience affected your life? If you have never suffered racially motivated violence, how do you think you would respond if you did?

10. What are the significant Native American rights issues in your locality? Are American Indians supported by non-Indians in their social justice efforts?

11. "Treaty beer," called "bigot beer" by those boycotting it, is a blatant example of racism through advertising. What are some other instances of racist advertising that you have seen or heard?

12. Almost all the refugees received in the United States each year arrive from Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe while thousands of our Latin American and Haitian neighbors seeking asylum are rejected and deported. What are the political and racial implications of this reality?

13. Should local churches and denominations actively work to oppose legislation and congressional funding of deportations and interdictions in the United States and Mexico? If so, how should this be done? If not, why not?

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THE PAIN *of* OPPRESSION

▲ PEOPLE OF COLOR HAVE STRUGGLED with racism as individuals and as communities. The reality of racism is ever-present for them. Their stories show the constant struggle required by people of color to live their lives in a racist society.

The stories in this chapter illustrate the difficulty of, and the courage required for, trying to change a society or a church in order that future generations might not have to face the same oppression. White people can also learn from these stories just how the society is structured to benefit them.

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MY SOUL LOOKS BACK

KEEPING THE FAITH BY CLAIMING THE PAST

by James H. Cone

When people ask me about the decisive influences on my theological and political perspectives, my response always includes something about my mother and father, and what it meant for a black person to grow up in Bearden, Arkansas, during the 1940s and '50s. The more I reflect on who I am and what is important to me, the more the Bearden experience looms large in my consciousness.

Is it nostalgia? It may be that, but I do not think so. I am not homesick for Bearden or even for the Macedonia A.M.E. Church there. The importance of Bearden is the way it enters my thinking, controlling my theoretical analysis, almost forcing me to answer the questions about faith and life found in the experience of my early years. The people of Bearden are present around my desk as I think and write. Their voices are clear and insistent: "All right, James Hal, speak for your people."

AS A SOURCE OF IDENTITY AND SURVIVAL, THE FAITH OF THE CHURCH WAS WHAT SUSTAINED THE PEOPLE WHEN EVERYTHING ELSE FAILED. AFTER BEING TREATED AS THINGS FOR SIX DAYS OF THE WEEK, BLACK FOLKS WENT TO CHURCH ON SUNDAY IN ORDER TO AFFIRM AND EXPERIENCE THEIR HUMANITY.

Two things happened to me in Bearden: I encountered the harsh realities of white injustice that were inflicted daily upon the black community; and I was given a faith that sustained my personhood and dignity in spite of white people's brutality. The dual reality of white injustice and black faith, as a part of the structure of life, created a tension in my being that has not been resolved.

If God is good and also all powerful as black church folks say, why do blacks get treated so badly? That was the question that my brother Cecil and I asked at an early age, and it is still the question that creates the intellectual energy and passion for my writing today.

Because of the passion with which I write and speak about white people's oppression of blacks, people sometimes think that I have had personal experience of lynching, rape, police harassment, or some other blatant expression of white brutality common in many places in the South. But that is not the case. In fact, because of the absence of extreme forms of oppression, the white folks of Bearden did not think of themselves as being cruel or unjust to black people.

They regarded the social and political arrangements that they maintained to be an expression of the natural order of creation. White people took it for granted that blacks were supposed to address all white adults as "Mr." and "Mrs.," and they responded by calling all blacks "boy," "girl," or by their first names. If a black person was old enough and also possessed the proper deference, then he or she may have had the dubious honor of being called "uncle" or "auntie."

Other expressions of the black-white social arrangements involved blacks going to the back door, smiling in the presence of whites even when nothing was funny, "colored" and "white" water fountains, and separate waiting rooms at the doctor's office. As I reflect back on my early years in Bearden, there is not any specific manifestation of injustice that stands out, but rather the social ethos that whites created and controlled. It was an ethos that was inherently dehumanizing for black people.

Although the social and political arrangements seemed permanent and unchangeable, I could never reconcile myself to accept the social etiquette of black-white relations. In church, home, and school, I was always taught to resist oppression and injustice.

The person most responsible for my deep resentment against oppression was my father. The tenacity with which he defended his rights and spoke the truth, regardless of the risks, earned him much respect among some blacks and the label "crazy" among others.

My father prided himself in being able to out-think white people, to beat them at their own game. His sixth-grade education was no measure of his quick, substantial intelligence. That was why he walked and talked with much self-confidence, and why he managed to avoid much of the dehumanizing climate of the black-white social arrangements. For example, he refused to work at

From *My Soul Looks Back* by James H. Cone. Published 1982 by Abingdon Press. Copyright 1986 by James H. Cone and republished 1986 by Orbis Books.

the sawmills and other factories in and around Bearden because he contended that a black person could not keep his or her dignity and also work for white people.

He also refused to allow my mother to work as a maid even in the hardest times. In extreme circumstances, my mother was willing to endure the humiliation for the sake of our survival, but my father always rejected her offer. He repeatedly told his sons that if he had anything to say about it, his wife and our mother would never be allowed to subject herself to such disgrace. In this context he explained why he always called my mother "Mrs. Cone" in the presence of whites. It was his way of forcing whites to address her with dignity and not by her first name.

John Spragens Jr.

Growing up with my father, working with him in the woods, and observing his dealings with whites and blacks had a profound effect upon my perspective about the world. He gave me the conviction that survival for black people requires constant struggle, and that no black should ever expect justice from whites.

Although my father seldom earned more than $1,000 per year, and often much less, he refused to allow white politicians to place their stickers on any of his property during election time. He was sometimes offered $200 or $300 for his support, but he always angrily declined the money.

As a child, I was sometimes troubled about why my father refused the money from white politicians, especially when he did vote for some of them, and we did need the money badly. When I asked him about it, he replied quickly and firmly: "Don't ever let anybody buy your integrity, especially white people. Tell them that it is not for sale. Do what you do because it is right and not because of the money involved. And never let yourself be put in a position where you are dependent upon your enemies in order to survive. For God will make a way out of no way, and he will make your enemies your footstool."

The truth of my father's saying became evident in his life. I do not remember ever worrying about our physical survival. In difficult times, when constant rain and cold or some misfortune with the truck prevented him from going into the woods to cut and haul billets, he always responded with a sense of humor: "If the Lord just help me over this little hump, then I will scale the mountain by myself."

The struggle to survive with dignity was not easy for any of the 400 blacks of Bearden. My father filed a law suit against the Bearden school board in the early 1950s on the grounds that the white and black schools were not equal. After the Supreme Court decision of 1954, my father's suit became a case for the integration of the schools. Absolute madness seemed to enter the minds and hearts of the white folks in Bearden at the very idea of blacks and whites going to the same schools. For the first time to my knowledge, Bearden whites began to talk about lynching Charlie Cone because he refused to take his name off the law suit. Fortunately, the lynch mob never came. Legal complications prevented the Bearden schools from being integrated until the 1960s.

IN THE CONTEXT OF Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church, resistance to white injustice was joined with faith in God's righteousness. My mother was one of the pillars of Macedonia, and a firm believer in God's justice. The spirituality which she embodied was typical of black Christians in Bearden, especially Macedonia. I do not remember any black church person in Bearden ever using religion to cover up oppression or as an escape from the harsh realities of life. Religion was rather the source of identity and survival, on the one hand, and the source of empowerment in the struggle for freedom on the other.

As a source of identity and survival, the faith of the church was what sustained the people when everything else failed. After being treated as things for six days of the week, black folks went to church on Sunday in order to affirm and experience their humanity. In the eyes of the Almighty, they were children of God whose future was not defined by the white structures that humiliated them. The value structures in the society were completely reversed in the church. The last became first, the janitor became the chairman of the Steward Board, and the maid became the president of Stewardess Board Number One. Everybody became somebody, and there were no second-class people at Macedonia.

The black church was the source, not only of identity and survival, but of the socio-political struggle for liberation. During my childhood, every fight for justice and civil rights was initiated in and led by the church. Because there were very few black people who were not dependent upon whites for a livelihood, the burden of leadership fell upon the preacher whose salary was paid by his congregation or upon some other self-employed black person. Seeing so many courageous ministers leading the struggle for justice in the name of the gospel undoubtedly had much to do with why I chose liberation as the central theme of my perspective in black theology.

In 1954, I graduated from high school and entered Shorter, a small two-year unaccredited college of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in North Little Rock, Arkansas. Later I transferred to Philander Smith, a slightly larger but accredited United Methodist College in Little Rock.

Leaving Bearden and going 80 miles to the "big city" of Little Rock was like going to another country. The problem of the relation between faith and justice could be viewed from a larger perspective. I began to read and hear about Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Montgomery bus boycott, and I experienced firsthand the 1957

integration crisis at Central High School.

Those were very rough and tense days. Once again the true nature of American democracy and white religion was revealed, and no amount of clever theological analysis could make black people think that the whites who harassed those nine black children were also Christians. Because white church people seemed not to know the obvious (that justice was God's will), many blacks thought that they were ignorant regarding spiritual and biblical matters and thus needed to be converted.

I must admit that I often made similar assumptions. But I also thought that white people's wrongdoings toward blacks were due to a lack of actual knowledge of what the Bible said and the absence of black confrontation of them with the truth of the gospel. I really wanted to believe that whites desired to do right, because it was the Christian thing to do. How could anyone claim an identity with Jesus and not be for justice? Because the behavior of whites blatantly contradicted the gospel, and because I thought that whites did such cruel things out of ignorance, I decided that I would inform them when the next appropriate occasion occurred.

One day, while riding the public bus, I sat down next to an elderly, churchly looking white woman who seemed serious and pious. (The buses were legally segregated, but my brother and I never observed that rule.) She quickly got up, uttering angry expletives at me. I went over to her with a smile on my face to calm her down. I said, "Madam, you look like a Christian, and that was why I sat down by you. How could you say the things you said to me when Jesus said that what you do to the least you do to him?"

"You are not Jesus," she replied with hate and violence in her eyes, "Get the hell out of my face, you nigger!" I began to realize that even if people know the truth, they will not necessarily do it. And religion does not automatically make people sensitive to human pain and suffering.

The existential need to analyze the contradictions in the black experience created in me a ceaseless intellectual curiosity. I wanted to read everything related to human problems that I could get my hands on. Shorter and Philander Smith provided an excellent educational context for the pursuit of my concerns.

I was introduced to a world of scholarship with philosophers, historians, and theologians. I began to read about Socrates and Plato, Aquinas and Luther, Kant and Hegel. The most interesting of all my subjects was "Negro history," as it was called in those days.

The more I read about black history, the more I became proud that I was black. Growing up with proud parents, attending black schools, and becoming a minister in a black church did much to make me proud of my blackness. But such things cannot sustain one's sense of worth in a racist society without a knowledge of one's past. A person without a past is a person without an identity. And the absence of an identity is very serious, because without self-knowledge others can make you become what they desire.

As I reflected on this issue, the more complex it became. I needed more help with the actual content of black history. For the first time, I began to read Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, and Carter G. Woodson. Reading black thinkers, mostly historians, I encountered the various ways that black people have struggled against white racism. I learned that black people have never been as passive as whites had suggested in their history books. Therefore my contemporary rebellious spirit had its roots in earlier black generations. This knowledge was quite liberating.

WHEN I LEFT LITTLE ROCK for Evanston, Illinois, to attend Garrett Biblical Institute (now Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary) in 1958, I was hardly ready for the emotional and intellectual challenge that awaited me. My brother and I went to Evanston to attend Garrett together, and we mistakenly believed that blacks were really free "up north."

My first awakening occurred when I decided to go for a haircut at a white barber shop. When I walked in, I thought that I noticed expressions of surprise on the white faces inside. As soon as I sat down, one of the barbers came over to me and said, "We don't cut niggers' hair in this place."

"Excuse me," I replied, "but I am not a nigger. It appears that you and your customers are the niggers." I quickly departed, not knowing emotionally how to assimilate the experience. I have never really quite gotten over it.

The problem was my naiveté. Garrett was not only "up north," but was a Christian institution. One would think that having experienced the contradiction of faith and justice in the white churches of Arkansas, I would have been ready for a few contradictions at Garrett as well.

My expectation of fairness while at Garrett raises the larger question of why many black people continue to believe that they will receive justice from whites when there is so little in our history to warrant that belief. Even a casual reading of black history in the United States shows that many black people really expected freedom after the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Civil War, and World Wars I and II. In fact, this spirit of black optimism was partly the philosophical foundation of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. The dominant theme in black life appears to be the belief that one day whites will do right. Regardless of my expectation to find justice at Garrett, very little was found there. Many professors treated black students as if they were dumb. One professor was well-known for the racist jokes that he told regularly in his classes. Ironically, he taught Christian ethics.

WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF GARRETT'S hostile, strange, and white environment, I barely made all C's my first quarter. The drop from an A student in college to a C student in seminary was very humiliating. When I went to talk to my professors about my grades, they looked at me with amazement. All contended that I deserved less, and that it was out of their Christian spirit that I received the grades I did. All said in their own way that they did not expect blacks to do any better than average and tried to encourage me to be content with my "black inferiority."

I was determined to make liars of my professors regarding my intellectual ability. During the second quarter, I decided to take only two courses, the minimum for registration as a full-time student.

My chief difficulty was with writing term papers. I purchased a ninth-grade English text and began an independent program of learning how to write. I was embarrassed, but my pride in proving my professors wrong was more important than the embarrassment of studying a ninth-grade text. I began to realize that if I

were going to achieve any degree of success as a writer in graduate school, I would have to consider the people to whom I was writing, and the form in which they expected good writing to appear.

Although I was still struggling with my writing, I had become a straight A student by the time I reached my senior year. When I took the Comprehensive Exams for the Bachelor of Divinity (now Master of Divinity) degree, I passed with distinction. Later I was awarded the systematic theology prize for being the best student in that area.

THE BLACK CHURCH WAS THE SOURCE, NOT ONLY OF IDENTITY AND SURVIVAL, BUT OF THE SOCIO-POLITICAL STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION.

During my senior year I decided to apply for the program leading to the Ph.D. degree.

Garrett had never had a black Ph.D. student. When I went to inquire about the M.A. and Ph.D. program at Garrett-Northwestern, the acting graduate advisor at Garrett, the professor of Christian ethics, looked at me as if I were insane. "You are not going to apply for the M.A. and Ph.D. program, are you? Well, I will inform you now that you will not be accepted. You don't have a chance. In fact, there are several straight A white students from Yale and Harvard whom we are rejecting. Now what chance do you think you have?"

I realized later that the graduate advisor was acting on his own prejudice and was not implementing stated academic policy. His comments about Yale and Harvard students were meant to intimidate me and actually were not true. Many Garrett students with averages much lower than mine were accepted for the M.A. and Ph.D. program.

But at the time I was depressed. I went to William Hordern, a professor of systematic theology who had encouraged me to apply to the program, and told him what had been told to me. He became angry, and his response was emphatic: "Jim, you go right ahead and apply, and if you're not accepted, I'll quit." That was the first time that any white person had ever put himself on the line for me. I relaxed, because I knew that Garrett would not let one of its best and most respected scholars depart over a matter such as this.

Even though all Ph.D. students were automatically given major scholarships, I never received any form of financial assistance from Garrett, except a permission for me to borrow about $1,000 from the federal government. I had to work part time as a janitor and painter, labor 12 hours per week for a white family who owned the garage apartment where I lived, and also serve as an assistant pastor at Woodlawn A.M.E. Church in Chicago. Working many hours, however, was not my major difficulty.

My most difficult problem in graduate school was learning how to stay in school during the peak of the civil rights movement. Many of my black classmates, including my brother, were deeply engaged in the civil rights struggle. Some blacks asked me how I could stay in the library reading ancient documents about Nicea and Chalcedon, while blacks were fighting for their freedom in the streets. All I knew then was that I had an intellectual craving to do theology and to relate it to black people's struggle for justice.

Equally problematic for my stay at Garrett was the absence of the discussion of racism as a theological problem. For a black person who was born in the South and whose church had come into being because of racism, the failure to discuss racism as a central problem in theology appeared strange and racist to me.

Even though the civil rights movement was the hottest news item in America and had been identified by most as the critical problem facing the churches of the 1960s, no theologians defined the problem as a central issue in theology. Most North American theologians identified their task as keeping up with the problems defined by European theologians.

Before completing my doctoral dissertation, I accepted a teaching position at Philander Smith College in January, 1964. I completed my dissertation during the summer, defended it successfully in the fall, and participated in the graduation exercises in the spring of 1965.

There were five students receiving the Ph.D. degree in religion at Garrett-Northwestern that year, and I stood in the middle, two others on each side, and with a sense of pride in my achievement. I waited for the Garrett professor who told racist jokes and who said that I would never be accepted into the Ph.D. program. He congratulated the first two doctoral students, shaking their hands; then he skipped me as I extended my hand, and went to the next two, congratulating them for their outstanding achievement. I could not believe that he could continue to be so obvious with his racism. But I smiled. Getting a Ph.D. degree was a milestone.

I RETURNED TO PHILANDER SMITH with enthusiasm. But what did Barth, Tillich, and Brunner have to do with young black girls and boys coming from the cotton fields of Arkansas, Tennessee, and Mississippi seeking to make a new future for themselves? This was the major question for me. And it was further intensified by the civil rights struggle.

I experienced the contradiction between theology as a discipline and the struggle for black freedom in the streets at the deepest level of my being. How was I going to resolve it? I had spent six years studying theology and now found it irrelevant to the things that mattered most to me.

I tried my hand at writing articles about Barth, Feuerbach, and the death of God theology for publication. They were rejected, and rightly so, because my heart was not in them. I was in an intellectual quandary. On the one hand, I was involved existentially with the civil rights movement, but on the other, I did not know how to relate theology to the black struggle for justice.

In 1966 I left Philander because the administration made it clear to me that my departure would be welcome. It appeared that I was not properly submissive to the white people who controlled the board of trustees. These people were unquestionably committed to keeping Philander mediocre so that it would not in any way compete with another (white) United Methodist institution, Hendrix College, in Conway, Arkansas, only about 30 miles from Little Rock. Therefore many young black professors were urged to leave, and some administrators were dismissed when they became too interested in the best education for black students.

I went to teach at Adrian College in Adrian, Michigan. It was not until I moved to Adrian that a clear outline of a black theology began to emerge in my theological consciousness.

Adrian provided me with time for reflection which I had never had before. I felt alone and isolated there. My salvation was found in black music (spirituals, gospels, blues, and jazz) combined with a disciplined program of reading black literature and other writers concerned about human suffering. I immersed myself in the writings of Baldwin, Wright, Fanon, Camus, Sartre, and Ellison as well as the new black writers emerging from the context of the black power movement.

When I compared these writers with Barth, Tillich, Brunner, and Niebuhr, I concluded that I was in the wrong field. How could I continue to allow my intellectual life to be consumed by the theological problems defined by people who had enslaved my grandparents?

The challenge to say something about God and the black liberation struggle was enhanced as I read and heard the comments of white theologians and preachers who condemned black violence but said nothing about the structural white violence that created it. They quoted Jesus' sayings to blacks about "love your enemy" and "turn the other cheek" but ignored any application to themselves. I could hardly contain my rage.

IT SEEMED THAT BOTH MY Christian and black identity were at stake. My first priority was my black identity, and I was not going to sacrifice it for the sake of a white interpretation of the gospel that I had learned at Garrett. If Christ were not to be found in black people's struggle for freedom, if he were not found in the ghettos with rat-bitten children, if he were in rich white churches and their seminaries, then I wanted no part of him.

The issue for me was not whether black power could be adjusted to meet the terms of a white Christ, but whether the biblical Christ was to be limited to the prejudiced interpretations of white scholars. I was determined to set down on paper what I felt in my heart.

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination on April 4, 1968, marked a turning point in the political consciousness of many black Americans regarding nonviolence as a method for social change and as an expression of Christian love. Although I had embraced black power before King's murder, that event intensified my conviction and made me more determined to write an extended essay equating black power with the Christian gospel.

By the summer of that year, I had so much anger pent up in me that I had to let it out or be destroyed by it. The cause of my anger was not merely my reaction to the murder of Martin King. Neither was it due simply to the death of Malcolm X or the killing of so many blacks in the cities. My anger stretched back to the slave ships, the auction block, and the lynchings. But even more important were my personal encounters with racism in Bearden, Little Rock, Evanston, and Adrian. From these experiences, I promised myself that I would never again make a political or theological compromise with racism.

The writing of *Black Theology and Black Power* that summer was a therapeutic and liberating experience for me. It is an understatement to say that I did not attempt to write a "balanced" and "objective" view regarding black-white relations in theology, church, and society. I knew whose side I was on, and I was not going to allow my training in white academic scholarship to camouflage my feelings.

When it became clear to me that my intellectual consciousness should be defined and controlled by black history and culture and not by standards set in white seminaries and universities, I could feel in the depth of my being a liberation that began to manifest itself in the energy and passion of my writing. Writing for the first time seemed as natural as talking and preaching.

The writing of *Black Theology and Black Power* was also a conversion experience. It was like experiencing the death of white theology and being born again into the theology of the black experience.

I now realized why it had been so difficult for me to make the connection between the black experience and theology. Racists do not define theology in a way that challenges their racism. To expect white theologians to voluntarily make theology relevant to black people's struggle for justice is like expecting Pharaoh in Egypt to voluntarily liberate Israelites from slavery. It is the victims and those who identify with them that must make the connection between their struggle and the gospel.

What then was and is the relationship between my training as a theologian and the black struggle for freedom? For what reason had God allowed a poor black boy from Bearden to become a professional systematic theologian? As I struggled with these questions and the ambiguity involved in my vocation, I could not escape the overwhelming conviction that God's Spirit was calling me to do what I could for the enhancement of justice in the world, especially on behalf of my people. It seemed obvious to me that the best contribution I could make was to uncover the hypocrisy of the white church and its theology.

I had been studying and teaching white theology for more than 10 years and had achieved the highest professional degree possible. Not many blacks had my technical training in theology, and no one, not even white theologians, could question my academic credentials. I felt that God must have been preparing me for this vocation, that is, the task of leveling the most devastating black critique possible against the white church and its theology.

As I wrote, I kept thinking about my slave grandparents in Arkansas, Alabama, and Mississippi, and of the silence of white theologians about their struggle to survive the whip and the pistol. I also thought about the auction block and the Underground Railroad, and what both meant for the realities of slavery and black people's struggle to liberate themselves in an extreme situation of oppression.

I could not avoid thinking of my mother and father, who were still living in Bearden at the time, and their struggle to create a humane and Christian environment for their children. Lucy and Charlie Cone had worked hard and endured much white abuse in Bearden so that I could have a sense of worth and self-confidence, thereby enabling me to become a teacher and writer of Christian theology. I had to say something that would represent the truth of their lives.

The universal manifestation of courage and resistance that I saw in my father's life continues to make anything that I might achieve seem modest and sometimes insignificant. At most, what I say and do are just dim reflections of what my parents taught and lived. If they, risking livelihood and life, could make a stand against the white folks of Bearden, cannot I, protected by tenure and doctorate, at least say a few words and do a few things that represent the truth of black life? ■

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VICTIMS OF AN AMERICAN HOLOCAUST

GENOCIDE OF NATIVE PEOPLE

by Steve Charleston

When it comes to interracial dialogues, Native People are often the last to be heard. We don't have the numbers. We don't have the economic or political muscle. When the subject is racism, we are never the first community of color to come to mind. And yet we have an absolutely fundamental experience that must be taken seriously.

The Native experience of racism is the foundational experience for all that has occurred in this hemisphere over 500 years. In 1992 we mark 500 years of colonial rule in our homeland. That track record alone gives us a critical insight into the function of Western racism. We've endured it longer than anyone else. The wisdom of Native People on this subject is the key, the source for developing a strategy to overthrow both Western racism and Western colonialism.

The most virulent form of the disease of racism has been used against Native America. Like other oppressed people, we have known slavery, poverty, and political conquest. We have also known something else—genocide. The greatest mass extermination of any race, any culture, any people happened here. It happened to us.

IF RACISM IS THE MATHEMATICS OF HATE, THEN GENOCIDE IS ITS LEDGER BOOK.

Western colonialism may speak of an American history. Native People speak of an American holocaust. If racism is the mathematics of hate, then genocide is its ledger book. How many Native People died in the American holocaust? Thirty million? Forty million? Fifty million? How many were slaughtered? How many were sent to concentration camps? How many died of diseases they couldn't even name? The American holocaust is our experience. It is our testimony.

The testimony of Native People to this genocide is rarely heard because Native People have been trivialized by Western propaganda. If all those millions perished in a holocaust, why has so little ever been said about it? The answer is simple: You cannot have a crime if you do not have a victim. A concerted, intentional, methodical effort has been made by the West to erase the memory of Native America. As a people we have been the objects of one of the most successful racist propaganda campaigns

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in history.

From the very beginnings of Western colonial expansion right up to the present day, we have been trivialized. The dominant society has used every means at its disposal: the dime novel, the Wild West show, the Saturday matinee, the Western television serial, textbooks, the Sunday sermon, cartoons, the editorial page, the congressional record; they have all been pressed into service to denigrate and diminish our stature as witnesses to the truth of the holocaust. This process of trivialization is not accidental. It is the intentional, racist process by which the nightmare of the American holocaust is transformed into the reassuring image of the American Dream.

THE LESSON TO BE LEARNED FROM THE NATIVE EXPERIENCE IS THAT ALL OF US STILL HAVE A CHOICE. NATIVE AMERICA STILL STANDS. IT HAS SURVIVED THE HOLOCAUST.

THE TRIVIALIZATION OF Native America through the medium of Western colonial propaganda replaces Native People with a pantheon of mythical colonial heroes. As the memory of the holocaust is obscured, new images of the American Dream are pushed forward into the national consciousness: faithful Pilgrims; brave pioneers; founding fathers; gentle missionaries; a new world; a wilderness; exploration; discovery; and the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria.

Racist propaganda always seeks to divert attention. All of us, Native and non-Native alike, who look the other way, who accept the myths of the dream without question, who endorse the assumptions laid before us by colonialism, are guilty of perpetuating Western racism. We give tacit approval to the myths of colonialism.

Think about Columbus Day. How many of us have been raised to accept the doctrine of discovery? Think about Thanksgiving. How many of us accept the image of smiling Indians surrounded by smiling Pilgrims? Smiling victims embracing their smiling executioners? In light of the holocaust, it is a macabre image. In light of racist propaganda, it is a powerfully effective image. If we believe it, we are part of it. We are part of the dream.

The central purpose of diverting our attention is to keep us from focusing on the real reason for the American holocaust. Western racist propaganda has told the American public that the conflict between Western colonialism and Native America was a conflict over "things"—land, gold, or furs. Western colonizers needed these "things," and Native People had them but were supposedly too primitive to use them. The struggle over possession of them was tragic but necessary, we are told.

This is the logic of racism, and it has been widely accepted as historical fact. In truth, however, the holocaust was not carried out for the sake of "things." It was the result of the longest continuous religious war in human history. Native People were slaughtered because they did not share "the dream."

The West has conducted a capitalist *jihad* against Native America. It has sought to convert Native People to the doctrine that Western capitalism is the best of all possible worlds. In response, Native People have maintained a guerrilla war against their oppressors. They have resisted conversion and held fast to the traditional spiritual center of their own way of life. They have kept an alternative alive.

The alternative of Native America is the alternative of the tribe over against the capitalist state. It can be symbolized as the horizontal against the vertical. Native civilization in North America represented a political, social, and economic system that radiated out from a religious center through the communal network of extended family and kinship.

In contrast, colonial capitalism represents a vertical hierarchy of economic and political privilege exclusive of spiritual values that places men and women in an artificial competition based on race, class, and gender. The choice offered to Native People by capitalism was clear: convert or die. The grim statistics of the American holocaust bear silent tribute to the decision made by generations of Native People.

THE LESSON TO BE learned from the Native experience is that all of us still have a choice. Native America still stands. It has survived the holocaust. It has endured the propaganda. It continues to resist the American Dream state. The religious war goes on, and Native People are in it for the duration. As veterans of the struggle against colonialism, capitalism, and racism, they are still in the field. Though few in number and often without allies, they represent an unbeaten alternative to business-as-usual in the great American technocracy.

When people of color gather to discuss racism, they should consider the men and women who have sacrificed so much to keep this alternative alive. Native People do not share the assumptions and mythologies of their oppressors. They do not simply want a higher place on the pyramid of capitalism; they do not want a bigger piece of the action for themselves; they do not aspire to joining the middle class. They do not want *more*. As the tribe they want enough for all to share equally.

The tribe as a metaphor for community is dangerous. It is dangerous to colonial capitalism. It is dangerous to racism. It is dangerous because it is a symbol for the strength of the oppressed. It is an inclusive symbol for all women and men who want to wake up from the dream. It says to people of all colors and cultures: There is a better way. Let go of the myths and the images and the empty promises. Join hands in the strong bond of kinship. Become a tribe. Fight back. Let the victims be redeemed and the survivors set free. The struggle is 500 years old. Now is the time to decide. ■

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CRIMES OF PUNISHMENT

AT THE DOOR TO REFORM OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

by Anthony A. Parker

PRISON. My firsthand glimpse of prison was an experience for which there was no adequate preparation.

I waited in line in the cramped prison office to sign in. That process included having my left hand stamped with an ultraviolet light, walking through a metal detector, emptying my pockets, having my briefcase searched, and finally being patted down by a guard.

I made the mistake of taking my tape recorder out of my briefcase. No tape recorders or cameras are allowed in the prison. The guards at the front office said they would hold it for me until I returned.

I had been granted permission to accompany the members of the National Commission on Crime and Justice, a group of 20 African-American, Asian-American, Latino-American, and Native American activists, academics, and attorneys convened by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). We were to inspect the Central Facility at the Lorton Correctional Complex, operated by the District of Columbia Department of Corrections, in Lorton, Virginia.

BY INCARCERATING PEOPLE—PARTICULARLY THE MOST VULNERABLE IN OUR SOCIETY—WITHOUT REGARD TO WHAT INFLUENCED THEIR CRIMES, WE GIVE UP HOPE FOR THEM.

Ninety-eight percent of the inmates at Lorton are African American. Whites and Hispanics make up the remaining two percent. I saw African-American prisoners, and I saw Hispanic prisoners, but I saw no white prisoners. I did see a lot of white guards.

Johnny Showell, assistant administrator for programs at Lorton, and our guide, led us first through the Industrial Division where license plates are made. I watched one inmate place new license plates in plastic bags. That was his job. It's an act of unskilled labor that will not get him a job when he leaves prison, pay him a decent wage, instill in him any sense of accomplishment, or keep him from returning to prison.

Our next stop was a dormitory where inmates are housed. This was an unscheduled stop on the tour. Jacquie Holmes, a prisoners' family rights advocate and a commission member, insisted we make the stop. It made no sense, she said, to take a tour of Lorton and not see the men where they live. Holmes, the wife and mother of offenders incarcerated in Oregon, has been battling with prison officials a long time and is naturally suspicious of them. She was right, of course, and the rest of us agreed.

The one-story building resembles an Army barracks with guards stationed at each end of the building. Sixty-seven men live here together, their beds side by side in rows, with a small locker resting behind each bed. The building is not air-conditioned during the summer months.

KERWOOD CORBIN, 40, LIVES HERE. He has been at Lorton for nine months. He was arrested for petty larceny—he stole a bicycle off the street. Corbin has three more months to serve before he is scheduled to be released. A convict by society's standards, he is also a prisoner of the corrections bureaucracy.

Corbin was originally scheduled to go before the parole board in June 1989. Because of chronic backlogging due to overcrowding—each caseworker at Lorton oversees approximately 105 prisoners—Corbin was not brought up before the parole board until November. By that time he had already served more than half his sentence. The parole board decided that he might as well complete it.

Corbin cannot take advantage of the numerous vocational training programs offered at Lorton because his stay there is less than two years. Incarceration for less than two years means "you're just sitting around," according to Corbin. "They're sending people over here that don't meet the criteria [for training programs]," he says. Administrative officials say it takes at least two years for an inmate to learn a new trade or skill given their schedules—which may include up to six hours of paid work a day, psychological therapy, classes, and meetings with their caseworker.

The last stop on the tour was the academic central facility. Principal Barbara Hart, a former teacher in the District of Columbia public school system, has an excellent vantage point from which to observe the flaws in the educational system. When the schools are working well, they can be instrumental in keeping people out of prison. Presently 90 percent of the men coming in to Lorton are operating on fourth- and fifth-grade reading

levels, meaning they are functionally illiterate.

Hart is under no illusions about how much she and those she works with can accomplish. "Our job mainly is motivating 35-to-40- year-old men who were drug kingpins in the street and have a reputation in the dorm," Hart said. "In the classroom, however, his peers know he can't read."

PRISON, FOR MANY AMERICANS, remains a vague reality. That seems odd since we pay so much to keep prisons in operation. But the debate around prison reform has focused mainly on overcrowding, longer sentences, racial disparities, and the spiraling costs of incarceration, while there is another element of incarceration that needs immediate redress: the treatment of prisoners while incarcerated.

On February 28, 1990, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that mentally disabled prisoners can receive anti-psychotic drugs against their will even if the drugs have "serious, even fatal, side effects." According to the American Psychological Association these drugs have "grave effects, inherent potential for abuse, and an actual history of indiscriminate use by the psychiatric profession." The 6-3 Supreme Court decision overturns a previous ruling by the Washington state Supreme Court.

On March 5, 1990, less than a week later, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down another devastating decision. In a 5-4 vote, the court made it significantly more difficult for prisoners in state prisons to challenge their convictions in federal court. The ruling reflects the Supreme Court's conservative-majority impatience with state prisoners who appeal to federal courts because their constitutional rights were violated or claim that changes in the law since their original trial void their conviction. The new ruling, which does not take into account mitigating factors that would legitimately lead to a federal appeal, will have a major impact on death penalty cases.

"THERE IS AN INTERCONNECTEDNESS BETWEEN THE STRUGGLE FOR A MORE EQUITABLE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AND THE CONTINUED FIGHT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR AND POOR PEOPLE."

"I see no parallel to this era of public meanness, legislative cruelty, and societal apathy with regard to the problems I am addressing," says Carl Upchurch, executive director of the Progressive Prisoners Movement (PPM), a prisoners advocacy group based in Newark, Ohio. "The Constitution is being brazenly circumvented in efforts to deny and renege on those rights which are guaranteed by that document."

Using Martin Luther King Jr.'s Poor People's Campaign as a model, Upchurch is urging prisoners to empower themselves through nonviolent resistance. "For the last two years, I have been trying to form a cadre of people who won't participate in a system I see as brutal," he told *Sojourners*.

1990 MARKED THE 200th anniversary of the penitentiary in the United States. Since 1790, when the first prison was established in Philadelphia, the perception of crime and punishment by incarceration has been framed and inflamed by political rhetoric.

Incarceration—indeed the entire criminal justice system—has evolved into a $25 billion industry. We love to build jails and prisons, even though we know we cannot continue to do so. Incarceration makes us feel good, if not necessarily safe, and prevents us from critically assessing the root causes of crime.

AFSC's National Commission on Crime and Justice in 1990 led a yearlong campaign, officially called "200 Years of the Penitentiary Project: Breaking Chains, Forging Justice." The campaign attempted to raise public awareness by highlighting, addressing, and proposing solutions to the root causes of crime. In 1991, the commission released a "call to action," which included public policy recommendations concerning criminal justice reform.

"There is an interconnectedness between the struggle for a more equitable criminal justice system and the continued fight for social justice for people of color and poor people," stated project coordinator Linda Thurston. "Alternatives to our current reliance on lengthy incarceration exist and must be brought to light, supported, and strengthened."

The combined number of people languishing in federal and state prisons and local jails has surpassed one million. Major penitentiaries and entire prison systems in more than 40 states are under order to improve conditions and put a ceiling on their inmate populations. Meanwhile, state and local governments must increasingly choose between building a new prison or building a new school. By 1995, the interest on bonds used to finance prison construction in the United States will be $600 million. That is $600 million not being spent on health care, education, or child care.

Consider these statistics: In the last decade, the official crime rate has risen only 7.3 percent while the number of people incarcerated has risen by 100 percent; on any given day, 3.5 million men, women, and children are under some type of correctional control—incarceration, probation, or parole; $13 billion a year is spent on federal and state prisons and local jails; per capita spending on prisons and jails has increased by 218 percent during the last decade; and, it costs on average more than $1 million to incarcerate one prisoner for 30 years.

In May 1989 President Bush proposed a $1.2 billion federal anti-crime package that he claimed would "take back the streets by taking criminals off the streets." This proposal has several components: Spend $1 billion on new federal prisons to house 24,000 additional inmates; hire 1,600 federal prosecutors; hire 825 new agents to work in the FBI, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, and the U.S. Marshals Office; increase the maximum sentence for a person convicted of using a semiautomatic weapon during a kidnapping or felony drug deal from the current five years to 10 years. The problem with the Bush plan is that its emphasis rests solely on punishment.

EXPANDING THE DEFINITION OF criminal justice, then, must be the place to start. This process can only begin by moving away from the "lock 'em up and throw

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away the key" language of conservatives as well as from the "more means better" policy of liberals who advocate for social programs as a cure-all for crime.

There are, in fact, merits and flaws to both the conservative and liberal perspectives on criminal justice. Prisons are necessary for certain people who commit certain—usually violent—types of crimes. But incarceration is no substitute for rehabilitation. Advocating for the elimination of racism and economic injustice will not eradicate crime or deter criminals in society.

The point is that politics can neither solve, nor replace as a theological anchor, what is ultimately a moral problem. Connecting aspects of both liberal and conservative perspectives about criminal justice, while challenging their underlying assumptions, can be accomplished through a faith perspective.

For Christians, biblical justice is not merely essential, it is the point from which any effort at reform originates. Prison evangelist Charles Colson summed up the role of the church best when he wrote on how to bring the conservative and liberal perspectives together. Calling the difference between the two views—and the role of the church in each one—"a false dichotomy," Colson said, "The church today urgently needs to recapture its whole biblical vision, understanding that there are not two calls upon Bible-believing Christians, only one....It is not enough to say that we are working to fulfill the Great Commission; nor to say merely that we are working for justice in society."

THE CHURCH MUST BECOME AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN THE STRUGGLE TO KEEP PEOPLE OUT OF PRISON AND IN THE WORK OF MINISTERING TO THOSE ALREADY INCARCERATED.

The role of the church looms large in the debate around prison reform, whether from the vantage point of an individual outside of prison or from the perspective of an individual within the criminal justice system. The church must become an active participant in the struggle to keep people out of prison and the work of ministering to those who are already incarcerated. "Prison ministry must be holistic," says Ken Rogers, director of the prison ministry at Times Square Church in New York City. "This translates also into helping the families of the inmates," he says, primarily by providing spiritual guidance and by attending to other needs.

OUTSIDE OF THE CHURCH, services provided primarily by local and state governments outside of prison—education, jobs, adequate housing, and health care—should provide a system of checks and balances, leaving prison as a place of last resort, and a place for extreme cases such as Charles Manson or the "Son of Sam." When this system fails, prison then becomes society's first solution for its social ills. But "the criminal justice system is a poor second choice for treating societal problems," states Marc Mauer, assistant director of the Sentencing Project, a Washington, D.C.-based organization that advocates sentence reform and researches criminal justice issues.

A new report released by the Sentencing Project—*Young Black Men and the Criminal Justice System: A Growing National Problem*—finds that 609,690 black men in their 20s are under the control of the criminal justice system while only 436,000 (1986 figure) black men of all ages were enrolled in college. According to the report, 23 percent—one in four—of black men ages 20-29 are either in prison, in jail, on probation, or on parole at an annual cost of $2.5 billion. For Hispanics, the rate is 10.4 percent; and for white men, 6.2 percent. Sixty percent of all females incarcerated are women of color.

The nation's prison population exploded by a record 46,004 inmates during the first six months of 1989. This is the highest half-year increase ever recorded. Since January 1, 1981, the number of prisoners per capita doubled to 260 per 100,000, or one out of every 400 people. If these figures continue to rise at this rate, one out of every 200 people will be a convicted felon by the year 2000.

"Prisons work essentially for those people who have something at stake in the community," according to Charles Rouselle, director of the Offender Rehabilitation Division of the Public Defender Service in the District of Columbia. "This automatically excludes the poor and indigent who have nothing to lose." Indeed, the economic and human resource drain caused by increased incarceration, particularly for first offenders convicted of nonviolent crimes, only heightens the sense of anger, separateness, and neglect by society.

For minorities and poor people, it is becoming harder to distinguish life in prison from their own neighborhoods. Many criminal justice reform activists point to housing projects located in inner cities as an extension of prison. In housing projects women and children are the primary "prisoners," while the men are often literally behind bars. Increasingly, the housing projects themselves have bars on windows, armed guards and police patrols, and are surrounded by high fences.

To escape such an environment, poor young people are turning to drugs. As a result—either by death or incarceration—an entire generation of adult leadership is being lost in black communities.

New mandatory sentences for drug offenses are overloading all aspects of the criminal justice system—police, prosecution, parole, probation, and courts. And city and county jails are bearing the brunt of incarcerating these young men and women.

"The drug epidemic caught us by surprise, and now we are forced to try and fix a train while it is running at a rapid speed," says Walter Ridley, acting commissioner of the D.C. Corrections Department. Ridley's frustration stems from the fact that corrections officers are not only required to incarcerate criminals, but they are also expected to rebuild values shattered by drugs, and care for an offender's physical and mental well-being, with inadequate facilities and low funds.

"We are subjected to all these criticisms. Corrections needs the same kind of support given to fire departments, police departments, judges, and prosecutors," according to Ridley. "So goes corrections, so goes the entire criminal justice system in this country." Elmanus Herndon, acting commissioner of the Maryland Division of Corrections in Baltimore, agrees. "What is it that we want the

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system to do?" he asks. "Educators, social workers, and corrections officers are also in prison. They have stress levels, too."

An unspoken alliance between the news media and politicians seems to have presented the public with a simplistic view of criminal justice: When someone commits a crime, they should be punished. "The system is characteristic of the military-industrial complex," says Jerry Miller, director of the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives (NCIA) in Arlington, Virginia. In the rush to incarcerate, individual needs are often caught up in "a very banal, manipulative series of arrangements." In other words, justice is often overlooked in the whole process.

INAPPROPRIATE RESPONSES to nonviolent crime are responses that substitute punishment for rehabilitation and accountability; prohibit the participation of victims, offenders, local communities, and forward-thinking corrections officials in the debate; and ignore the fact that by placing people—particularly first-time offenders in an environment that reflects the one from which they were taken defeats the purpose of criminal justice. "Americans fantasize about incarceration," says Barry Krisberg, president of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, a criminal justice research group based in San Francisco. "Punitive responses are embedded in the American psyche."

The whole question of alternatives to incarceration has historically been absent from any public debate about criminal justice. But recently advocates for alternatives to incarceration have had some positive examples across the nation on which to base their argument.

Alternatives require individualized attention, as an attempt is made to match the punishment to the crime, rehabilitate the offender, and compensate—as much as possible—the victim. Adequate treatment of the cause of an offense cannot take place if officials are operating from the premise that the same yardstick should be the measure for all crimes. But an increasing number of judges across the country welcome the alternatives because they are provided with options and because the alternatives often cost far less than incarceration.

Even in cases of violent crime, alternatives to incarceration should be considered, asserts Mark Mauer of the Sentencing Project. Critical to understanding and accepting the idea of alternatives is the ability to "distinguish between a violent offense and a violent offender."

As an example Mauer compares the situation of a battered wife who hurts or kills an abusive husband with that of a first-degree murderer. "Can it really be said that the battered wife will commit the same crime? No. But it can reasonably be argued that a murderer would kill again." The majority of crimes—including drug-related offenses—and the majority of people incarcerated—including repeat offenders—are nonviolent in nature, according to statistics compiled by the federal government.

The Correctional Alternatives Act of 1989 (H.R. 2374), a bill introduced in Congress in May 1989 by Rep. Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.), seeks to involve the federal government in the debate about prison reform. The bill would provide federal money to states and cities to support programs for alternatives to incarceration. The bill encourages state and private-sector partnerships in providing vocational and job training, as well as drug and alcohol abuse programs for offenders.

These programs would be in addition to two relatively new alternative concepts. The first, a type of "boot camp" for drug offenders, is basically modeled after military boot camps, where a strenuous daily regimen of exercise and work is required. But reaction to the usefulness of boot camps has been mixed because of questions raised about their rehabilitative potential. The second alternative, which is more accepted, is electronic monitoring, in which offenders wear an electronic bracelet around their ankle that allows their probation officer to track their movements by computer. If offenders leave home when they are not supposed to, the authorities are immediately alerted.

THE INCREASING SOCIAL AND financial costs of increased incarceration, and the worsening condition of those most likely to be incarcerated, however, have demanded that activists not wait for the federal government to set up alternative systems. In 1989, Michigan became the 15th state to enact a community corrections bill. This bill serves to "encourage communities to assume greater responsibilities for their own offenders by having local boards develop and support a range of community sanctions and services which offer alternatives to incarceration and reduce recidivism."

The Association for Community Corrections in Michigan (ACCM), a non-profit association composed of 33 organizations located across the state that advocate for community corrections or offer community corrections programs, was formed to aid in the implementation of Michigan's Community Corrections Act (P.A. 511). The services offered by ACCM include substance abuse programs, job training, peer counseling, vocational and educational training, and mental health services.

A community corrections program—with its emphasis on neighborhood sanctions—is particularly valuable because it offers poor and minority people equal access to alternative opportunities for rehabilitation alternatives given to middle- and upper-class whites on a regular basis.

"Alternatives supplement what is in the community but is not being done in the home, school, family, and churches," says Cecelia Wright, executive director of the Alternatives Center/Offender Aid and Restoration of Oakland County in Pontiac, Michigan. Wright also serves

as president of ACCM. "People get arrested and they get incarcerated, but it doesn't stop their problem. We have to intervene in this cycle if we are to save our cities.

"More than 70 percent of the Alternative Center's clients are between the ages of 17 and 24. Fourteen percent of the clients are women. Typically, men coming into the program have a problem with substance abuse and some have committed larceny, according to Wright. Women usually have been convicted of prostitution, fraud, and shoplifting.

The Alternatives Center operates a 30-bed residential facility where clients can live from four to six months. Program services include counseling, vocational training, and G.E.D. preparation. Clients pay a small fee as if they were paying rent. After 30 days, clients can begin a job search and work, but they must return to the facility at night. Less than 20 percent of the clients get into trouble with the law once they graduate from the program.

ALTERNATIVES REQUIRE INDIVIDUALIZED ATTENTION, AS AN ATTEMPT IS MADE TO MATCH THE PUNISHMENT TO THE CRIME, REHABILITATE THE OFFENDER, AND COMPENSATE—AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE—THE VICTIM.

BY HER OWN ADMISSION, Judy Stevenson never wanted for anything growing up as a child. She was reared in a stable home with two hard-working parents and finished high school. Just over a year ago, Stevenson, 36, a divorced mother of three teen-agers, stood before a judge in Detroit. She had been arrested for stealing. She had sold what she stole and used the money to buy drugs.

Since 1977 Stevenson had been in and out of jail, usually for parole violations. Her last term in jail lasted 18 months. This time, however, her latest arrest marked her as a fourth habitual—a repeat offender on a new charge. The sentence for a fourth habitual is a life term, which means in her circumstances serving anywhere from one to 20 years in prison.

From her cell in the Detroit House of Corrections, Stevenson wrote a letter to the judge who was to sentence her. "I was tired of going through these changes," she says. "I was tired of going through the criminal justice system. I needed help." She asked the judge to get her into a drug treatment program. Not once during her long history of arrests had she been offered the chance to get drug treatment, Stevenson said in the letter. She had always been incarcerated.

At her sentencing the judge told Stevenson that he had received her letter and sentenced her to one year at a drug treatment center called Rap House. If she left Rap House without permission or got into any kind of trouble, she would immediately begin serving an eight-year prison term.

After six months at Rap House, Stevenson left without permission. She walked out the front door, went home, and called her probation officer to ask for an appointment with the judge.

Through a friend, Stevenson had heard of the Alternatives Center, and asked to be placed in that program. The staff at the Alternatives Center told her that this was her last chance and that she could do right or go to prison. The choice was hers. She persevered and successfully completed the program with no violations.

Stevenson currently works as a press operator at a steel factory. "I go to church now," she says, "because God has answered all my prayers."

CHRISTOPHER THAMES IS FROM the Southfield section of Detroit. He was 17 and a senior in high school when he was arrested in Pontiac, Michigan, in 1985. Thames was originally arrested for two counts of accessory to a crime—he was driving a vehicle which was carrying stolen merchandise. The charges carried a penalty of five to 15 years, but the sentence was reduced through plea bargaining to breaking and entering. Placed on probation, Thames missed two consecutive appointments with his probation officer.

"I was a time bomb emotionally," says Thames. "I had no respect for authority." On the recommendation of a family friend, and with the consent of the judge, he entered the Alternatives Center. It was his first time away from home and was not an easy transition.

Sentenced to four months at the Alternatives Center, Chris served six months for "disciplinary problems." He was required to attend classes to make up for lost time at high school and to learn how to fill out job applications and résumés.

After serving his first 30 days at the center, Thames found a job as a parking valet at a night club. The environment was not conducive to staying out of trouble, so he left and found work as a retail salesperson, the job he held when he graduated from the program.

Thames, now 24, is currently working as a licensed insurance salesperson and living on his own. He has also completed two semesters of college. He credits his experience at the Alternatives Center as a blessing.

Prisons and jails have become a dumping ground for the aged, insane, infirm, poor, and people of color. Nonetheless, prisons and jails remain a fact of life. By incarcerating people—particularly the most vulnerable in our society—without regard to what influenced their crime, we give up hope for them. Unfortunately, it is the financial implications of increased incarceration, and not a moral imperative, that is spurring such a flurry of activity in recent years around prison reform.

The damage done by unnecessary incarceration extends beyond the criminal justice system. For every man, woman, or youth incarcerated, there is usually someone left behind—wives, husbands, children, siblings, parents, and other loved ones. Families and communities become dysfunctional as a result.

Alternatives to incarceration offer a more potent symbolism about how justice should operate in a modern, supposedly "kinder and gentler" society. The criminal justice system is not an entity unto itself; it is a spin-off of the wider culture. The two must be reformed concurrently.

Anything less is simply not reform. ■

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IN THE MIDDLE

THE CHALLENGE OF RACIAL RECONCILIATION

An interview with Catherine Meeks.

Sojourners: How did you first become involved in work on racism, and why do you continue?

Catherine Meeks: The first time in my life that I realized race in America was something I had to address myself to was as a college student at Pepperdine University in Los Angeles. A 16-year-old boy, named Larry, was shot and killed on our campus by a campus security guard. This was in the mid-'60s, when black people were very tired of having that kind of thing happen and having everybody say, "Well, isn't that too bad," and just go on about their business.

So we, as black students, waged a lot of protests around the whole event—how the funeral was handled, how the family was dealt with, and how the security guard was dealt with. Larry's death led to a time of questioning for me, a time of trying to figure out what kind of response I, as a Christian, should make in this situation.

Ed Spivey Jr.

Catherine Meeks is a professor and the director of African American studies at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia. She has completed an interdisciplinary doctorate at Emory University in Atlanta, combining studies in Jungian psychology, women in West Africa, and Afro-American literature.

I was a member of a black student organization, and I wanted to be really committed to it. But I also had a fairly strong and long-standing Christian commitment. I went to my church for advice, and their advice was that I should stay home until the whole situation got settled. To think that somebody who's supposed to be a Christian should run away from a situation where it looks like they could make a difference was appalling to me!

I was only 20 years old, working my way through school and trying to help take care of my sister, so it wasn't like I was "looking for a cause"; I was not. But somehow, in a way that wasn't completely thought out, I found myself at the house of the boy who got killed; I found myself talking to college administrators; I found myself in meetings with my peers in the black students' organization; I found myself in the white prayer group on campus. And in all these groups, we were talking about the situation and about what we should be doing. Somehow it became clear to me that as a black person I couldn't run away from those issues of racism and that my own well-being was mixed up in all of this.

While I was in college, I responded more out of passion and a sense of commitment to God. But looking back on those years now, I don't think I ever had a choice to not be involved. Even then I seemed to be geared toward reconciling. I was always trying to listen or to call people to look at both sides. And that's a lot of what I did during the events around Larry's death. By my mere involvement, I was forced to look into other points of view.

I was a scared, young woman from an Arkansas farm in the middle of a big problem on a campus in Los Angeles. I didn't have any idea what all that meant. I was just there. And in the middle. Later I started to really understand that racial reconciliation in America is an issue that black and white people have to confront personally, as an issue of wholeness.

Reconciliation demands that you not take sides; it demands that you take a stand, I think—a stand that's maybe a merging of a lot of different pieces that represent several different kinds of philosophical stances. I think that one who chooses a road of reconciliation must be willing to look at more than one side of the coin.

Some people would say, "Racial reconciliation is fine and good, but black people need to get together and deal with their internalized racism and build a strong self-image apart from white people before they can enter a reconciliation process. And white people need to work at dealing with their racism before they go into a reconciliation process." How would you respond to that?

I think that's true. You have to have some sense of yourself before you're able to really call other people into accountability and get other people to deal with how they're responding to you. But I think we have to be very careful not to use that as an excuse for staying in our little

pockets, safe and secure, and never dealing with the internal racial dynamics, either on the black side or the white side.

It seems to me that none of us is going to deal with racial dynamics unless we're forced to. And by interacting with one another, we are forced to confront some things we wouldn't otherwise deal with. I don't have to confront racism the same way if I'm dealing with another black person as I do if I'm dealing with a white person. Racial interrelatedness does, at least, present the issues to both sides.

What are the things that discourage you the most in this work? What are the bad experiences you've had?

I'm fortunate in that most people who have been in audiences when I've spoken about race have been polite enough not to throw eggs at me. A few times I've had somebody walk out of a meeting, which is always a shocking experience. Sometimes I think, "Well, maybe they're going to the rest room or something." But a woman got up out of one meeting and yelled at me as she was going out. So, it was rather clear that she was leaving because of me, and it had nothing to do with her having to go to the rest room!

I have gotten anger from people in workshops, and sometimes folks come up to me to set me straight or to tell me how good they are. That's discouraging. I don't really know about the people who just leave and dismiss me without saying anything. But the folks who try to convince me how great, how liberal, and how open-minded they are discourage me even more than the angry people, because the angry people stand a better chance of making some changes.

It's the white people or the black people who say, "I never had any prejudice" who are frightening to me, because that's obviously not true. They don't even know themselves well enough to know that they do have some prejudice. I don't think anyone can walk around in America without having some racial prejudices.

When I look at where we are now compared to where we were in 1955 or 1965, I get discouraged. In terms of attitudes, I don't think we've made any progress. Maybe we've made a bit of progress, but it's minimal. I think the systemic changes were made just because people were forced to make them by legal structures and not because people had any significant changes of heart.

When I look at the economic and spiritual conditions the majority of black people live in, I sometimes find myself close to despair. We had a big fanfare about racial equality, racial awareness, and black consciousness in the '60s and early '70s, and now people seem to think, "Well, we've done that, so we don't have to do anything else." Well, we didn't do it. We didn't do it then, and it's still yet to be done. The fact that we're sitting down as if we did it and we can rest now is disturbing to me.

I think young black folks, with their rage and their disillusionment with living in this culture, are going to force us to look at these issues again in a much more straightforward way. And I'm sorry about that, because I think we spent enough energy and blood in the '60s that we should never have to do that again. But we just don't learn from our history.

You have talked about the connection between racism and sexism. How have you experienced this connection?

It's a very profound connection, a connection that white people have a hard time making. Let me be more specific. It's a connection that white women have a hard time making, and it's a connection that black men have a hard time making, because it's not to either group's advantage to make the connection.

White women traditionally have wanted to say, "Because we understand sexism, we are not racist"—which is really a joke. Black men have said, "Because we know racism, we are not sexist"—which is equally a joke. And white men, of course, have just been racist and sexist, and they go on as if that's the way you're supposed to be.

For white women to say, "Sexism is really where we need to be focused, and this is what we need to be doing" is to ignore what black women have had to confront since the first black women set foot in this land. For black men to think that because they were enslaved and emasculated they somehow have an edge on oppression and therefore can't possibly be patriarchal and sexist is equally as crazy.

As with so many other things, it has fallen into the laps of black women to call attention to that connection between racism and sexism, because we are victimized on both sides of the coin. And as black women, we are left then to try to figure out what we're going to do about racism, what we're going to do about sexism, and who we're going to try to build coalitions with.

Our coalitions with white women have failed because white women won't acknowledge the whole of our problem. Yet they want our expertise and our energy to help them get something that they're not willing to share with us when they get it—the power that comes from being liberated.

We don't have any choice but to build coalitions with black men. They're part of our lives; it's not as if we can say, "Well, we don't want to have anything to do with you." So we have to try and figure out how to have relationships with the men who can't seem to see what they have done to us by not acknowledging their own sexism.

It leaves us in a funny position. I think it may force us as black women to finally come together as a group. I don't think black women are going to work all this out without building coalitions. But we must be sensitive as to whether or not folks we're working with are really willing to understand the whole of the problem. Sexist oppression, racist oppression, and classist oppression—all of it equals oppression, and you can't have integrity in your stand against oppressors without standing against all oppressors, wherever they happen to be.

I have an unmerciful analysis of the white women's movement, because I've been in conversations with white women who wanted me to take sides. They wanted me to take a stand on the side of fighting sexism and not to stand against both racism and sexism. They somehow wanted to associate fighting racism with patriarchy or with standing with men. That's the kind of split no black woman in her right mind can afford to make.

How do you explain what racism is and how it is that people are racist?

Racism is a combination of prejudice and power. You can be prejudiced, I think, and have no power. Some poor white person who has no education, no money, and hates black folks can do far less to me than a white person who is the manufacturer of a product or who runs a business.

Power is used to enforce your prejudice and to keep other people from realizing gains and rewards in the culture simply because of your prejudice against them. It's personal as well as systemic.

When white people say, "I'm not a racist," they think of themselves not as somebody who wants to abuse and misuse somebody else because of the color of their skin. The way the average white person participates in racism, even if they're not somebody who would condone it, is by enjoying the gains that have come in a society that is built on the backs of black people and by enjoying the economic and political power that has come to them because of the color of their skin. By accepting that power as a birthright, white people enjoy the benefits and rewards of what their racist forefathers left for them, even if they don't use their power to exploit other people.

In terms of prejudices, we cannot live in this country as blacks and whites without having some disregard, I think, toward one another, because it's just in the air. If you're black, you don't have to necessarily grow up hating white people, but you grow up knowing you're black, and with a sense that it means something different than if you're white.

Now what often happens with white people is that they grow up not really knowing or having to think about race. They grow up in a kind of "a-racial" atmosphere, and because they're in control of everything or their parents are powerful, they're not threatened, and they don't have to deal with racism. That person is not much less prejudiced than the one who grew up being told not to "sit down at the table with niggers." Both of them are equally a problem for me as a black woman, because if your racism is that unconscious, you're a problem; and if you consciously act negatively toward me, you're also a problem. So you don't get off the hook either way, as far as I'm concerned.

What can people do about their racism, whatever the combination of prejudice and power it happens to be?

They can start out by really trying to think about who they are and how they got to be that person. Then they can examine their attitudes toward everybody who happens to be different than them.

One of my friends told me that she never thought she was racist or prejudiced. She always thought she was open-minded and accepting of everybody, and for the most part she was. Then, all of a sudden, she came home hysterical after taking her son to school for the first day, because he was going to have a black teacher. Somewhere in her was a stereotype of what a black person is that characterized black people as inferior. She was appalled at herself, and, thank God, she was willing to confront that in herself. If white people want to deal with their prejudices and if black people want to deal with their prejudices, they need to have that kind of self-reflection.

What can people do about their prejudices? I think if people really get serious about this, they can refuse to live their lives in isolated, homogeneous groups. It's important to be willing to go into situations where you know you're going to find people of a different class, a different educational background, or a different race, whose philosophies are different. It's easier to be with people who are just like ourselves. But there's no reason in the world why you can't interact with people who have different political ideologies, different religions, and who have been socialized in different ways from you. Such interactions help you to catch glimpses of your prejudices and help you deal with them.

I once did an internship in a public hospital, where I worked with cancer patients, some of whom were white, many of whom were black, and most of whom were poor. It forced me to look at and relate to a whole different kind of person from the graduate school crowd or the college teachers' crowd that I'm used to. If we're serious in dealing with our prejudices, then we need to force ourselves out of our boxes.

But you can't go into this kind of process like it's a sightseeing trip. You've got to have openness and sensitivity; you have to be careful not to feel superior or be the one who's in control.

BY ACCEPTING POWER AS A BIRTHRIGHT, WHITE PEOPLE ENJOY THE BENEFITS AND REWARDS OF WHAT THEIR RACIST FOREFATHERS LEFT FOR THEM.

How does your doctoral dissertation relate to your work on racism and to your view of yourself as a black woman?

My dissertation is on black women and feminism. Its title is "The Mule of the World: A Jungian Investigation Into the Afro-American Woman's Struggle Against Sexist Oppression." In the last five years I've been studying Carl Jung, and my graduate work is focused on Jung and African culture and Afro-American culture. I'm looking to writers Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker, using them as examples of the evolution of consciousness in black women over a 50-year period.

What I'm trying to do is a historical overview of what black women have been doing in their struggle against sexism. I'm trying to look at whether you can discover archetypes in the black woman's experience that are peculiar just to the black woman. And if so, what are they, and how have they fueled the black woman's struggle against sexism?

Black women have been talked about too much as stereotypes. We've been looked at as the matriarch or the mammy—the "earth mother." Or we're seen as the "loose woman" in high-heeled red shoes and a red dress—the harlot. There are other dimensions of our personalities that have never really been acknowledged. I don't think my dissertation will take care of the whole problem, but it's a beginning place.

The whole project has been one of enhancing my own journey, because at the bottom of all of this searching of Jung, black women, feminism, and Africa has been my own undying question about what it means to be a black woman in the world. It's been a continuation of a quest to understand myself better as a black woman and as a person of faith trying to journey through life with integrity.

If you find something that's true for you, a real temptation is to say, "Now I understand; I've got the puzzle figured out." Like they did in the Bible, you want to build a tabernacle, and you don't ever want to leave that spot—because we are all looking for security and a place to be comfortable.

But the better response is, "I see this little piece of the truth; it encourages me to keep looking—and to keep traveling." The kind of quest we're on will never end until we die. We don't ever "arrive"; we're always just on the way. ■

TO MOVE BEYOND DENIAL

TOWARD A VISION OF A NEW COMMUNITY

by Yvonne V. Delk

AS THE FIRES RAGED out of control in the streets of South Central Los Angeles, I found myself asking the question, How long, O Lord, How long?—knowing that those who never learn from history are destined to repeat it.

We have not learned from Watts, Detroit, Chicago, or the cities all over this nation that the price we pay for institutionalized racism, the historic denial of justice, and broken covenants is fragmentation, isolation, and violence. We have not learned that as long as some of us are not free, none of us will be free. We have not learned that the road to one nation under God is really justice and liberty for all of us, not some of us.

Rick Reinhard

That the disease of racism permeates our institutions is not a new revelation to those of us who have been in the struggle from Mississippi to Los Angeles to Chicago. The full meaning of Los Angeles can never be contained in the narrow frames of pictures that reveal white policemen savagely beating an African-American male, or the pictures of those who in response savagely beat white motorists caught in the crossfire. The complete picture must reveal the devastating impact of slavery, extending to the current reality of attitudinal, cultural, and institutional racism.

This picture reveals systems that have failed and a broken and divided nation that has lost its sense of community—common bond—or of being connected to one another as sisters and brothers in one human family.

Where do we go from here?

From the denial of racism to the naming and facing of racism.

IF WE ARE TO MOVE beyond Los Angeles, we must first face Los Angeles as a manifestation of racism, alive and well in the American psyche. It continues to function as a demonic force with devastating consequences for us all. To be white in America is to benefit from a system of power and privilege whether or not one has ever uttered a racist thought or committed a racist act.

The white community needs to move beyond denial to the facing of racism, the naming of racism, and the commitment to do everything in its power to change racist behavior and systems of injustice.

From a complicity of silence to finding our moral voice.

UNTIL LOS ANGELES, religious and political leadership had been unbelievably silent on the issue of race in this country. Racism was on the back burner of this nation's agenda, as well as that of our presidential candidates. Now is the time to gain the moral high ground and our voice. We need leadership with a clear vision of a racially inclusive society.

From the blaming of victims toward the elimination of victimization.

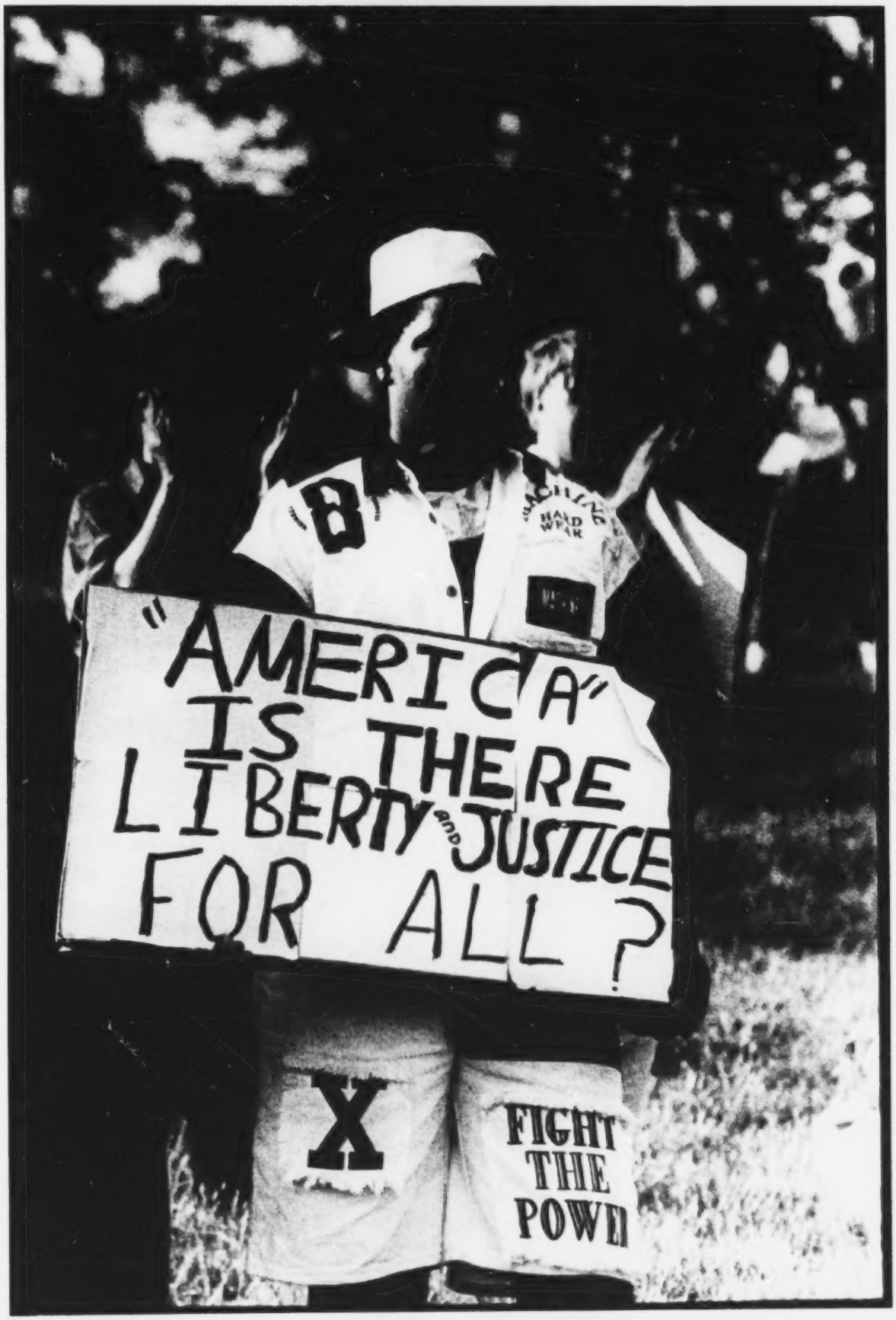
CLEARLY the political policies and priorities of the past two administrations have not only failed us, but have made us captives to an economic system that produces a permanent underclass. We are all victimized by the blatant injustice that results. It's time to stop blaming each other and to start blaming the racism, materialism, and militarism that have brought us to this place.

From fragmentation and isolation to community.

IT'S TIME FOR US to come to a common table and begin the process of building relationships. This will not be an easy task, for much pain, betrayal, and oppression separate us from one another. In Los Angeles we saw fragmentation and isolation in its rawest form, and a rainbow of young people venting their rage and anger in ways that will only keep us divided.

We must work toward a vision of a new community—a multicultural, multiethnic community. We must move toward an America that we have never seen and yet must be—an economically and racially just America. ■

YVONNE V. DELK is a Sojourners contributing editor and the executive director of the Community Renewal Society in Chicago.



Jeffry Scott/Impact Visuals

AFTER THE SIMI VALLEY VERDICT

A CHRISTIAN CONFESSION OF CONSCIENCE

"Riot is the language of the unheard."

—Martin Luther King Jr.

THE STUNNING APRIL 29 ACQUITTAL of four white police officers charged with assaulting black motorist Rodney King took Los Angeles literally by storm. In its wake this storm left 58 people dead, more than 5,000 buildings torched, and a city in a state of shock. Now it is incumbent upon those of us who reside here to make sense of these dramatic events.

We are a group of concerned Christians, lay and clergy, who have devoted ourselves to the work of justice, peacemaking, and service in this city. We are part of a group that has met regularly for several years to reflect theologically and politically on our work. Many of us are, like the Simi Valley jury, persons who by race and class inheritance belong to the dominant culture. We feel compelled to make this public statement because those in this city with race and class privilege are avoiding taking responsibility for the violence and disruption.

LOS ANGELES THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION GROUP

Therefore, we make this confession: The Simi Valley verdict revealed the truth—not the truth about what happened to Rodney King, but the truth about the dominant culture. Sadly, history has yet again demonstrated that the dominant culture remains blind to race and class oppression and deaf to the cries of the disenfranchised unless and until there is a riot. As people committed to nonviolent social transformation, we cannot endorse the recent violence; indeed we are profoundly saddened by it, particularly the loss of life and jobs and hope. But we must recognize that we too bear responsibility for it. Indeed, as long as violence remains the language by which the dominant culture maintains its power, the unheard will be forced to use violence to reach us with their demands for justice.

The rebellion we have just witnessed compels us to acknowledge the judgment of the gospel in this historical moment. In light of it, we seek to repent (literally, to "change directions"). In our tradition this also requires that we make judgments of our own about some issues which arise out of the immediate aftermath of the rebellion.

WHY DID THIS HAPPEN?

Some of the religious leaders said to Jesus, "Teacher, command the crowds to be quiet." Jesus retorted, "I tell you, if my disciples keep silent, the stones will cry out!"

—Luke 19:39-40

ANTICIPATING THE POSSIBILITY of an unjust verdict in the LAPD officers' trial, religious and civic leaders urged residents to remain calm, admonishing protesters to vent their anger in socially acceptable ways. It was not to be: With every fire set and every stone hurled, the silenced anguish of the marginalized cried out.

In the aftermath we continue to hear a double refrain from the politicians, media commentators, and other moralists. They lament the verdict but condemn the riots: "Nothing justifies such behavior," they scold. But why wasn't the daily cycle of violence experienced by the poor of our city enough to command their attention?

Our churches are particularly culpable. "If my disciples remain silent, the stones will cry out." Why have we Christians learned to live with the injustices that became intolerable for those who rebelled? Why do we remain silent about the daily violence that the poor must live with, and speak out only when property is burned and looted, and *white* lives are lost? And does not our endorsement of the militarization of our city suggest that we are captive to the values of the dominant culture, that we too will go to great lengths to protect privilege rather than stand in solidarity with the poor?

We Christians need to repent of our silence. This means intensify our efforts to identify and address the roots of injustice in our city. It means opening up the conversation about the problems, not shutting it down through heavy-handed law and order. The liturgical season of Pentecost is the time when the church remembers its vocation to carry on the work of Jesus in the power of the Spirit. We therefore call on our parishes and our denominational leaders to devote the entire season of Pentecost to sober reflection upon the meaning of these riots, in order to deepen our comprehension of their rootedness in structural injustice.

■ We believe that our reliance on federal troops revealed our lack of moral imagination, and call on the churches to support long term efforts to promote community policing

strategies.

■ We urge state and federal legislators to enact and enforce strict gun control laws.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

"As for the people killed when the building fell on them, do you think they were more guilty than everyone else who lived in the city? I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all share the same fate!"

—Luke 13:45

MANY, PARTICULARLY POLITICIANS and the press, are trying to avoid responsibility for the riots by perpetuating a discourse that divides city residents into "bad people" (looters and 'hoodlums') and "good people" (clean-up brigades and 'law-abiding citizens'). Such false distinctions only mask the complicity of all who live in the city.

How can those in unaffected neighborhoods lament that "they are only hurting themselves," when the message of arson is precisely that people feel disowned in their own city? How can we call the looters "hooligans" when they have learned to "take what you can when you can" from white collar criminals, such as those involved in the Savings and Loan scandal? When executives of our major corporations increase their salaries while exporting jobs to the Third World and laying off workers at home, who is looting whom? How can we call those using fire or guns "thugs" when they have learned from U.S. foreign policy to prosecute grievances with violence? "Violence must always be condemned," said President Bush while in LA; was he including Panama and Iraq? The actions of the disenfranchised in our society only mirror the moral climate modeled by those in power.

Another avoidance is race-scapegoating. The images captured make it clear that this was a truly "multicultural riot." Race is not the issue; but racism is. The dominant culture is deliberately playing on racial tensions in order to obscure the deeper issues of class disparity (e.g. the way in which the media played upon already extant tensions between African Americans and Korean Americans in its coverage of the riot). The looters were from all ethnic backgrounds—but most were poor. The welfare system, contrary to Reagan-Bush apologists, is not the issue; long-smoldering resentment at institutionalized economic inequity is.

We Christians need to repent of the compulsion to blame others. We must instead take our share of responsibility for a system that is simply not working for a large sector of our population. Only then can we resist the logic of those now clamoring to make examples of rioters. We believe that extraordinary security measures, as well as vindictive punishment of the some 17,000 arrested during the rebellion, only serve to entrench the cause of the riot in the first place: official brutality and the absence of equal justice under the law. If our churches truly desire healing in our city, we must work for reconciliation, not criminalization and revictimization of those driven by racial and economic injustices to riot.

■ Therefore we decry the imposition of a state of emergency and its suspension of basic civil rights.

■ It is unconscionable that the same judicial system which could not convict four white policemen of beating King is now pressing for maximum sentences for looters. We therefore urge that amnesty be offered to those charged with nonviolent crimes.

■ We call for an immediate end to LAPD-INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service] collaboration, and the release of all undocumented persons not charged with crimes who were caught up in these sweeps.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

Jesus saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If only you knew the things that make for peace—but now they are hidden from your eyes....Not one stone will be left upon another because you did not recognize the moment of your visitation."

—Luke 19:41f, 44

MANY OF US JOINED in the volunteer initiatives to help clean up after the rebellion, to distribute food and clothing to the hardest-hit areas, and to raise money for rebuilding. Important as these efforts are, we acknowledge that they are not by themselves enough to loosen the yoke of oppression under which the poor of our city labor.

We Christians need to repent of our failure "to recognize the time of visitation." We must better understand how discriminations based upon race and class are mutually reinforcing in our society and our churches. Above all, if we are to help ensure that a genuinely new social order is constructed from the ashes of this uprising, we must listen to and forge a practical partnership with the poor. We call on the churches to think creatively how we can produce jobs and contribute to grassroots development in our own work. We must also participate in and critically monitor official efforts to rebuild the affected communities.

■ We call for all decisions concerning major reconstruction efforts to be subject to input and direction from residents of the affected areas and to focus on human resources and not just businesses and infrastructure.

■ We urge that as reconstruction contracts are awarded, primary consideration should be given to contractors and firms owned and operated by people of color, and local residents, especially unemployed at-risk youth, should be hired to carry out the work.

TOGETHER WITH THE LEADERS of our churches and all people of faith, we seek to discover the crucial role we might play in the rebellion's wake. Instead of scolding others, let us see how the seeds of injustice lie within us and the dominant culture from which we benefit. We are disheartened by the violence that has overtaken our city; but we know that because we were silent, the stones cried out in anger against an unjust system. May we come to truly "know the things that make for peace," and give flesh to them in our life and work. ■

DRAFTERS: Rev. Gregory Boyle, S.J., Leonardo Vilchis, Dolores Mission; Rev. Louis Chase, Lynwood United Methodist Church; Marty Coleman, All Saints Episcopal Church; Rev. Don Kribs, St. Camillus Center for Pastoral Care; Ched Myers, American Friends Service Committee; Rev. Luis Olivares, C.M.F.; Rev. Chris Ponnet, Our Lady of Assumption; Kieran Prather, Sandra Huckaby, LA Catholic Worker; Freddie Schrider, Episcopal Diocese Peace & Justice Commission; Rev. Jim Schrider, Christic Institute; Brian Sellers-Petersen, Bread for the World; Rev. Thomas Smolich, S.J., Sandy Perluss-Lejeune, Proyecto Pastoral; Rev. Jane Turner, St. John's Episcopal Church; Mary Brent Wehrli, So. Calif. Interfaith Task Force on Central America.

(Affiliations are for identification purposes only. This statement also appears in *Dreams on Fire/Embers of Hope: From the Pulpits of Los Angeles After the Riots*, edited by Ignacio Castuera, Chalice Press, 1992.)

STUDY SESSION 3 / QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What examples do James Cone and Steve Charleston offer to illustrate their statements that the U.S. church fails to address theological issues important to minority people? In what ways does the U.S. church approach virtually all issues from a white European perspective? Give examples from your experience. Based on these articles, what are the theological assumptions that you think need to be re-examined?

2. Steve Charleston says that white Americans have transformed the reality of the holocaust of Native Americans into a symbol of the American Dream. How was this done, and how is it still being done? Why do you think this has occurred? What do you think would be the result if your church, and this nation, faced up to this American holocaust? How would it change this country?

3. How is your church or denomination a place where minorities are affirmed as people? How is it not? Are the opinions of people of color considered integral or are they simply tolerated? What are some behaviors and attitudes that need to be changed in your church?

4. Is racism preached about in your church? What is said about it? What are the underlying assumptions of the sermons?

5. How much do you know about the correctional facilities in your community? Do you know people who are incarcerated or employed by a prison? How might you or your church forge such relationships and minister to people in prison?

6. Do you think the racial composition of U.S. prison inmates illustrates the societal effects of oppression and discrimination? How?

7. White people who are from a working-class or poor background are discriminated against because of their economic standing. Historically, these whites often have participated in discrimination against people of color. How does their participation differ from that of white people who have come from a middle- or upper-class background? What forces have encouraged their discriminatory attitudes? Within the context of your church, how can this problem be addressed?

8. Catherine Meeks suggests that beginning to relate to people of different race, class, religious, and ideological backgrounds will help you confront your stereotypes and prejudices. What emotions arise in you as you consider relating to people from different backgrounds and perspectives? Are there groups that you can join in your area that try to bring together people of different backgrounds?

9. Yvonne Delk refers to the attitudinal, cultural, and institutional forms of racism controlling America today. How can these distinctions help us dissect and name various forms of our racist reality? What are some examples of each?

10. The events in Los Angeles following the Simi Valley verdict have been described both as a riot and as a rebellion or uprising. How does the language we use affect our perceptions of such events? Do you feel one term is more apt than another? Why?

11. Political and religious leaders have been forced by the events in Los Angeles to place racism on the political agenda. How can we as believers and constituents use this opportunity to press for economic, social, and political reform?

12. How is economic justice tied to racial reconciliation? How are materialism and militarism linked to the existence of a permanent underclass in the United States? What steps can we take to end all three of these realities?

13. A call is offered in the final article to begin listening to and forging practical partnerships with the poor. What are some *specific* steps toward this goal? What obstacles—both personal and societal—exist before us?

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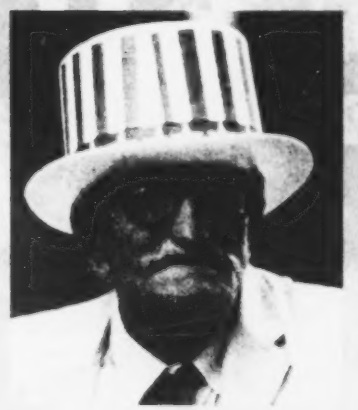
An UNCOMFORTABLE PRIVILEGE

▲ RACISM AFFECTS THE LIVES of white people as well as people of color. White people enjoy the privilege of status and the ability to structure society in ways favorable to them. Even those whites who have little control or authority benefit from the "perks" of whiteness. Thus, whites have grown up believing that they could always consider themselves better than people of color, no matter how bad their external circumstances are.

Although white people can never truly experience the impact of racism felt by people of color, there is a cost for whites who seek a just society. The four articles in this chapter present the perspectives of white people who have struggled with issues related to being a part of a racist culture, have confronted their own racism, and have aligned themselves with movements for social change.



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BY ACCIDENT OF BIRTH

GROWING UP WHITE IN DETROIT

by Jim Wallis

In the summer of 1967, Detroit exploded into a city at war with itself. I remember vividly the terrible fear that the "riots" created in white people. Afraid that blacks would break out of the ghetto to attack and burn the suburbs, the police and armed, white vigilante groups stood guard at the borders of suburban communities. The vigilante groups were a visible manifestation of an attitude that ran deep.

Detroit in the 1960s was two communities, one white and one black, separate and dramatically unequal. Growing up white in Detroit, I had no exposure to black people, but for an occasional glimpse on a downtown bus or at a Tigers baseball game. What I was told was based on the stereotypes so common in white culture.

As a teenager, I felt the tension and hostility that pervaded the conversations among whites whenever the subject of blacks, race, the city, or crime came up; people that I knew to be otherwise kind and loving would be transformed, uttering vicious words of intolerance and fearful hatred.

I wanted to know why. Why did whites and blacks live completely divided from one another? Why were whites rich and blacks poor? What created the fear? I was persistent in taking my questions to my parents, teachers, and friends, but I soon discovered that no one could answer them.

IN LISTENING TO THE BLACK EXPERIENCE, I DISCOVERED MORE TRUTH ABOUT MYSELF, MY COUNTRY, AND MY FAITH THAN BY LISTENING ANYWHERE ELSE.

Hoping that the church might provide some answers, I asked: "What about our Christian faith? Doesn't God love all people?" I reminded the people of the church of a song I was taught in Sunday School as a child: "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world, red and yellow, black and white, all are precious in his sight; Jesus loves the little children of the world."

Of course the song is true and God loves everybody, I was told, but there are differences. And of course we love everybody too, but that doesn't mean we have to live together.

I asked the church people why we sent missionaries to Africa but didn't have any contact with black people in our own city. Weren't there a lot of black Christians, and why didn't our churches ever have anything to do with one another?

I was told that we were better off separated. Some even used the Bible to undergird their argument, citing the Genesis story in which Noah curses the descendants of his son Ham.

Others said that blacks were happy with the way things were. They had their ways and places to live, and we had ours. There should be no problems. And if they had problems, they probably deserved them; after all, they were lazy, had too many children, and were dangerous.

Some people told me that asking these questions would only get me into trouble. That proved to be the only honest answer I ever got.

IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG to realize that I wasn't going to get the answers I was looking for from white people. So I decided to make my way into the inner city.

The first thing I discovered, to my great surprise, was that there were black Plymouth Brethren assemblies in inner-city Detroit. They were just like my church in most ways, right down to the same dreadful hymnbook, and I wondered why I had never been told about them. I sought out the elders of the black churches and learned that they had known about our assemblies for years. Most even recognized my name because of the role my father played in the white assemblies, and some had even met him.

As I asked my questions, a new world opened up. Here were black church leaders making time in their very busy lives for a young white kid, full of questions, who had come to see them in the inner city. They were extraordinarily patient and receptive, never patronizing and always compassionate. They must have been smiling inside at my idealism and the questions that had such obvious answers to them, but they never let on.

I felt that the church should lead the way toward change. One of my first ideas was that we get our churches together and march through the streets of Detroit on behalf of racial justice. They wisely suggested

we start smaller.

I believed that if black and white Christians would simply pray and examine the Bible together, they would learn to love one another and begin to see change. I was excited at the prospect. We decided on some meetings with people in the white churches. I learned later that the black leaders had been through all this before.

I'm sure I was so aggressive in setting up the meetings that the white Christians didn't know what to do except go along with the scheme. I will never forget our first get-together—in a white church, of course, since my white friends weren't about to go into the inner city. I can still see the polite, frozen smiles on their faces as they awkwardly shook hands with my new black friends.

There were not many meetings, and the idea soon died out. The interest was always strong from the black Christians, though I'm not sure why they were still willing to try after all the abuse they had received from white Christians. They were open and very reconciling in their posture. There were no angry words or militant spirits from these gracious saints.

My favorite was Bill Pannell, then a young leader in the black Plymouth Brethren assemblies and now professor of evangelism at Fuller Theological Seminary. I was deeply touched by reading Bill's book *My Friend, the Enemy*, a painful and articulate account of the experience of growing up black in white America. I felt especially hurt by his recounting of the racism of white churches.

Bill's was not the only book I read. I devoured everything I could get my hands on written by or about black people and racism in America. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* became one of the most influential books of my life. The simple, self-justifying worldview of my childhood and my church, conflicting with my growing awareness of racism and poverty, caused mounting havoc in my teenage years. I was shocked at what I read, felt betrayed and angry at the brutal facts of racism. Worse, I felt painfully implicated.

AS MY COMMITMENT TO THE struggle for racial justice intensified, I wanted to go further in my relationship with the black community. I desired to go beyond the black church and become schooled in those streams of black thought and action that were more militant and radical.

I began to seek opportunities for interaction and dialogue, especially with young black workers and students. Over several summers I took jobs working first as a machine operator in a small factory and then on custodial and maintenance crews in Detroit office buildings. The blacks I met were much more angry and bitter than the black Christians I had come to know, and they provided me with a new education.

They were Detroit's manual laborers and unskilled workers, who slaved hard for little money. They had no future in the system, and they knew it. The goods of a consumer society were dangled in front of their eyes like carrots on a stick, but they were systematically shut out of the good life.

They never had the opportunity for a decent education. They lived in upstairs flats, rooming houses, ghetto apartments overflowing with parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents, and friends who had no other place to stay. Many were at home on the streets and had become tough at an early age in order to survive.

Butch was typical of the young, bright members of Detroit's urban poor. Butch and I worked together as janitors at Detroit Edison the summer before I went off to college. Our lives were as different as the destinations of our paychecks. Mine went into a savings account for college, and none of it had to go for room and board since I was still living at home for the summer. His went to support his wife, mother, and all his sisters and brothers, who lived together in a small place in one of Detroit's worst neighborhoods.

According to the executives and their secretaries at Detroit Edison, the difference in the color of our skin meant Butch and I merited different treatment. Their race and class bias was blatant. I was often put on moving crews with Butch and the other blacks who worked there. They were regarded at best as men with strong backs and no heads, and at worst as beasts of burden. Nineteen-year-old office secretaries ordered them around, complaining constantly about their work.

The resentment among the custodial crew went very deep. After a while, some of them trusted me enough to talk openly in my presence about the hatred they felt for the system and those who ran it.

Butch and I were often put on elevator duty together. We both had to endure an insufferable barrage of bad jokes from the upper-echelon workers such as, "Bet this job has its ups and downs," and, "You're moving up faster than anyone in this whole company." We had been instructed to be polite and humor the people. But I never had to suffer the patronizing tone which always greeted Butch! I received respect because it was known that I was soon to be a university student and had every opportunity to one day be one of them.

The job became a school in political understanding, and Butch was a ready commentator and tutor. One night

when we were working late, we were asked to clean the executive offices on the fifth floor. These offices of the company president, the chairman of the board, all the vice presidents and executive officers, were more than extravagant. As I took in every inch of the spacious offices and conference rooms with thick pile rugs, hardwood furniture, and expensive art, Butch said, "Come here, I want to show you something." Well hidden away were the executive liquor cabinets, stocked full of the finest liquors and wines money could buy. Butch commented, "You think these guys spend all their time up here working, huh?"

BUTCH WAS very savvy—about the streets, the job, Detroit, and international politics. His education came from the pages of the perpetual string of books he kept tucked in the back pocket of his khaki janitor's uniform. His experience of oppression and his reflections on it were turning him into a political revolutionary. He was very conscious of and committed to the worldwide black liberation struggle, and he knew as much about African history as I did about American. My growing political awareness was bringing my convictions in line with his.

IF EDUCATION IS TO LEARN TO SEE THE TRUTH, TO KNOW THE WORLD AS IT REALLY IS, THEN MY EDUCATION BEGAN WHEN I GOT TO KNOW BLACK PEOPLE IN DETROIT. THEY SHOWED ME THE OTHER AMERICA, THE AMERICA THAT IS UNFAIR AND WRONG AND MEAN AND HATEFUL; THE AMERICA THAT WE WHITE PEOPLE ACCEPT.

The job gave us an opportunity to spend literally hours together. We had many of our best conversations in the elevators. Elevator operators are required by law to get periodic breaks, as going up and down all day without a respite begins to make one's head spin. But mine was already reeling with all the thoughts and ideas Butch was helping to nurture along, so I spent all my breaks in his elevator, and he spent his in mine.

We must have appeared as quite a startling pair to the office workers, toward whom we eventually learned to be oblivious as we continued our conversations nonstop while carrying them up and down. Here were two young men, one black and one white, carrying on intense conversations about revolution, urban guerrilla warfare in Detroit, and the overthrow of the capitalist system, while taking middle-management executives to their third-floor offices.

Butch and I talked about everything: our backgrounds, our families and neighborhoods, our churches. We discussed black consciousness, the police, and the suburbs. We lived in the same city, but might as well have grown up in two different countries.

Violence, both on the streets and in corporate boardrooms, was a continuing conversation. He gave me his views on the war in Vietnam as an imperialist war against people of color in which he would refuse to fight.

Eventually, Butch invited me to come to his home and meet his family. I felt deeply honored and very eager to go. But every time I asked him to write directions to his place, he would change the subject. Finally one day with pen and paper in hand, I sat him down and said, "Look, Butch, how do you expect me to get to your house if you don't write out directions for me?"

Awkwardly he began to scribble on the paper. I was deeply sad when I realized the reason he had hesitated before was that he could barely write; I was ashamed at my insensitivity.

That small incident was very significant to me. I went home that night and both cried and cursed. I could not believe that someone as bright as Butch had hardly been taught to write. I was furious at a system that had given me so much and him almost nothing, simply by virtue of our skin color. By accident of birth, I had all the benefits and he all the suffering. I vowed again through angry tears to do everything I could to change that system.

On the appointed evening, I went to Butch's house. I attracted a good bit of attention driving into his neighborhood and getting out of the car; in those days, white people didn't venture into certain neighborhoods of Detroit.

All but Butch's youngest brothers and sisters were nervous and suspicious of what a white man was doing in their home. Almost from the moment I sat down, the youngest ones were in my lap, smiling, their bright eyes sparkling at a new-found friend. But the older they were, the deeper the hurt and distrust in their eyes.

I stayed for several hours. When the older ones realized that I really was a friend to Butch, they began to open up.

I WAS ESPECIALLY TAKEN BY Butch's mother. She was a lovely woman, gracious and warm, so anxious for me to feel at home. She was just like my mother in so many ways. She wasn't interested in politics, was certainly not militant, would never have been taken for a radical. She was primarily concerned about the same things my mother was: the health, happiness, and safety of her family.

Her love for Butch was obvious. Since she had lost her husband, Butch had filled his shoes as the family provider. As the eldest son, he was her pride and joy. Butch's love and respect for his mother was also evident.

But I could also see how fearful she was of his growing anger and militance. She, just like my mother, was afraid that her son's political views would get him into trouble. It wasn't that she disagreed with him, but that she was afraid he might be hurt.

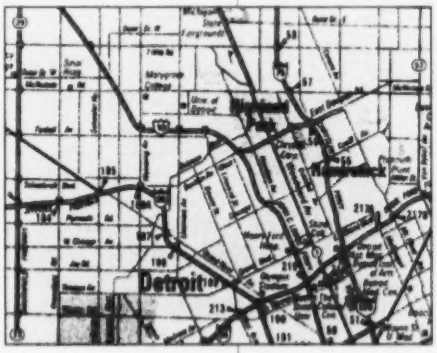
I asked her questions about her past, her experiences in Detroit, her family. She had a way of looking into your eyes and speaking right to your heart. I knew that I was hearing the honest reflections of a proud woman who had somehow kept her family together through the difficulties of growing up black in Detroit.

She recounted a history of poverty and abuse. I will never forget what she said about the police. She told of countless times that her husband or one of her sons had

been picked up on the street for no apparent reason, taken down to the precinct, falsely accused, verbally abused, and even beaten.

She would go down every time to find out what had happened and try to bring them home. Each time she was assaulted with vile and profane language. The police would tell her that they would "take care of" her husband or son, give her man what he deserved, and that she'd better "get her ass on home" or she was going to get the same treatment.

My insides began to hurt and my eyes to well up with tears as one by one every person in the room told me stories of how they or close friends had been abused by the police, mostly for the crime of being at the wrong place at the wrong time and for being black. I knew then that the reputation that the Detroit police had for brutalizing black people had been earned.



The image I had of the police as I was growing up came to my mind. My mother had told us kids that if we ever got lost, we should try to find a policeman, and he would help us and bring us home. Butch's mother told her kids that if they were ever lost and couldn't find their way home, they should try to avoid the police because if the police found them, they might hurt them. The police were known for verbally and physically abusing black children if they wandered too far from home.

There are many more people that I came to know and stories that could be told from those years. The fact is that people like Butch and his family were my teachers. If education is to learn to see the truth, to know the world as it really is, then my education began when I got to know black people in Detroit.

They showed me the other America, the America that is unfair and wrong and mean and hateful; the America that we white people accept. But they taught me about more than racism. They taught me about love and family and courage, about what is most important and what it means to be a human being. In listening to the black experience, I discovered more truth about myself, my country, and my faith than by listening anywhere else.

I felt a deep sense of betrayal by white America. I was disillusioned with my country and my upbringing as never before. My burning question became: Why hadn't I been told?

WHITE AMERICA SUCCESSFULLY KEPT the truth hidden, kept itself isolated and protected, until the truth finally could no longer stay ghettoized. It blew up in the faces of white America in cities around the country in the late 1960s.

The black anger that tore Detroit apart created not so much a riot as an insurrection. At root it was a political rebellion against the oppression and control of white America. Some of the young black men who tore up the city of Detroit in the summer of 1967 were friends of mine. I talked with them before and after, and I knew that their motives had more to do with political rebellion than random violence.

The riots were an explosion of pent-up rage, and the weight of oppression was their cause. Black political leaders went to the streets and tried in vain to quell the crowds, but it was too late. A revolutionary spirit had taken over, and nothing anyone could do or say would stop it.

Most of the casualties were black. I heard of incidents of black men lynched by white police and citizens, of black women being hauled into precinct houses and gang-raped by white police. The blacks fought back.

Black snipers shot and killed white police. A few white motorists who happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time were dragged from their cars, beaten, and killed. Windows were smashed, stores looted, businesses—black and white alike—destroyed. Whole sections of the city went up in flames. The city just stopped. I never saw anything like it before or since.

The police started to lose control, and the National Guard were sent into the streets with rifles, gas masks, and tanks, like an occupying army moving into the ghetto. Pitched rifle battles took place between the Guard and the snipers, the sort of urban guerrilla warfare Butch and I had talked about while going up and down in our elevators.

I remember wanting to go into the riot areas during the rebellion, but I would never have gotten in and to try would have been foolish. The ghetto was cordoned off as in a military operation, with police barricades and a strict curfew. I maintained an almost around-the-clock vigil at the television or radio, watching and listening to what was happening just a few miles away.

I could get close enough to where I could see the flames at night. They lit the sky up brightly, and it looked as though the whole ghetto was burning down. I could hear gunshots and sirens, and I wondered what was happening to the people I knew. I felt angry and helpless.

Virtually all the white people I talked to blamed the rioting on black people. The riots were totally baffling and deeply frightening to them. I felt helplessly stuck in the middle, unable to get into the city, unable to relate to the fear and lack of understanding expressed by my white friends and neighbors.

When the riots were over, my father and I drove into the city to survey the scene, which looked literally like a war zone. Gutted buildings, abandoned storefronts, piles of rubble—Detroit looked like it had been bombed. Soldiers still patrolled the streets, giving a feel of martial law, which was in fact what the situation had become.

Later the Kerner Report, the presidential commission study of the riots in Detroit, Newark, and other U.S. cities, identified their cause as the persistent racism of a society divided against itself. I must have read that report at least five times, studying its more than 600 pages with a thorough intensity. It completely confirmed my experience of the black community. The causes of urban violence were poverty and its accompanying miseries: bad housing and inadequate education, lack of medical

care, high unemployment. And the most commonly mentioned grievance by all the black people surveyed was police brutality.

FOR A LONG TIME I HAD TRIED to get my church to deal with the issue of racism. After the riots, the people of the church finally agreed to take up the subject. Even then it was relegated to a Wednesday night midweek meeting rather than Sunday morning.

The format of the meeting was to be a panel discussion, and I was to take "the side of the blacks." Two of the church's elders were selected to take the other side, the "white point of view." The fourth panelist was a young social worker new to the church, who was sympathetic to the black perspective.

I never prepared harder for anything in my life. My presentation was chock-full of unemployment figures, housing statistics, facts about poverty, welfare, inadequate education and health care, police brutality. It was also overflowing with Bible verses that dealt with God's love for the poor and concern for justice, and the reconciling work of Christ.

By the time the big night came I knew I was ready. I was sure that no one could dispute the facts of the situation or disagree with the overwhelming biblical imperatives for justice and racial reconciliation. I began my remarks with a line from a song by a black Detroit singer, which spoke to the depth of her personal despair: "The windows of the world are covered with rain; what's the whole thing coming to?" I shared what I had learned from blacks about their experience of being poor, segregated, and disenfranchised. The social worker buttressed my argument with more facts and stories from his experience in social work.

The response from the two elders was predictable. One spoke of how his Scottish grandparents had pulled themselves up from their bootstraps as immigrants to America, and he asked why blacks couldn't do the same. The other spent his time defending the American way of life, praising the virtues of capitalism. They failed completely to engage with anything I had said.

The discussion was then opened up to the congregation, and I hoped the conversation would improve. The first question set the tone for the evening. One of the adults who had known me since birth directed his question to me: "But, Jamie, would you really want Barbie (my younger sister) to marry one?"

It got worse from there. Most people refused to look at the suffering of black people. One after another they rose to emotionally defend themselves, their church, white America, and its way of life.

By the end of the evening I was thoroughly discouraged. Only my parents and the wife of the young social worker expressed any real support. People who had known me all my life came up to me afterward and offered a string of empty, patronizing remarks about how impressed they were with my presentation.

My first idealistic impulses had driven me to take my concerns to the church, with the hope that the church members would respond. Their defensive reaction and opposition to me only spawned greater awareness and more action, which spawned more reaction, and—it's a familiar story.

As the church people sought to justify themselves and the country they loved, that country seemed uglier and uglier to me.

My alienation from the church over the issue of racism grew to anger when I went away to Michigan State University. I had little to do with the church after I went away, but occasionally when I was home for a weekend, at the persuasion of my parents, I paid a visit on Sunday morning. I remember one Sunday when the preacher was a white missionary to South Africa. He gave a rather contentless devotional talk that said nothing about the situation of apartheid in South Africa.

Afterward I walked up to him to have a few words. One of the church elders, who was waiting to take him home for Sunday dinner, saw me coming. Worry was written all over the elder's face.

I asked our speaker what American missionaries were doing to oppose the racially segregated and exploitative system of apartheid in South Africa. He smiled and whispered, "Now I know that in this country you have a belief in integration. But let me tell you that it would never work in South Africa. We know these people and, believe me, we love these people, but they just couldn't handle equality with whites. The whites are the only ones who can really run the country and the blacks and the coloreds are better off with apartheid than they would be without it. I know because I've been there."

Quite sure of himself, he was a bit unprepared for my response and astonished by it. I looked at him with all the anger and bitterness that had been growing inside me for a long time toward such hypocrisy, and I said, "Some day when black people in South Africa rise up to take their freedom and put people like you up against the wall, don't you dare have the gall to say that you are being persecuted for the sake of Christ."

The missionary stood dazed for a moment with his mouth gaping, while the church elder turned so red I thought he might burst. Being an evangelist and assuming from my remark that I couldn't be a Christian, the missionary asked me if I had ever been to the church before. I replied that I had been there all my life and was now away at college. A smile of understanding crept over his face, and he nodded, "Oh, I see, you're away at college. One of those secular schools, no doubt."

Such interactions were typical of those years in my life. I had become a very angry young man, especially about the hypocrisy of the church. Little gentleness or humility could be found in my rage, and I'm sure I was more than just a little self-righteous and arrogant.

The people of the church and I found ourselves less and less able to talk with one another, and none of us had much desire or energy for it anymore. I continued to drift further and further away from Christian faith.

Eventually, the alienation from the church that my confrontation with racism had begun was completed by Vietnam. It would still be a few years before I would be drawn back to Jesus and would come to see, for the first time, that the gospel spoke with more power and authority than anything else I would discover to the questions that burned in my heart. ■

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AN UNFINISHED REVOLUTION

THE VISION OF A COMMON DESTINY

by Anne Braden

Each of us comes to our perspective on racism based on our own life experience. My life experience is rooted in growing up white and relatively privileged in totally segregated Alabama in the 1930s.

Through lucky accidents I came to the realization while I was still very young that the society which had nurtured me was totally wrong. It was wrong because the good things it had given me—cultural and seemingly spiritual, as well as material—derived from the fact that humanity itself was denied to people of color.

Coming to terms with that fact was a tremendously painful experience; it involved literally turning myself inside out. To be truthful, the pain has continued throughout my life in a distortion of relationships with people I love.

But the experience was also totally liberating. I define racism as the assumption that everything should be run by whites for the benefit of whites. For many white Southerners of my generation, understanding that our society was wrong on race was the "open sesame" that brought understanding of all the "other" issues.

From that beginning I quickly grasped the roots of our national violence in the genocide against Native Americans. I understood the wrong of an economy in which the few assume the right to luxury while others go hungry. I understood the wrong of our foreign policy which as I came to maturity in the mid-'40s was setting out to run not only this nation but the world for the benefit of whites. All this was liberating because it opened the way for me to use my talents in creative ways, in movements that were, and are, seeking to transform our society.

I describe my personal experience because I think the turning-inside-out that a white person goes through in dealing with racism is in microcosm what our whole society must do in order to move from death to life. We saw this acted out in the 1960s with the civil rights movement.

C.T. Vivian helped me understand that decade when he put it in the following theological terms: "It is true that we must repent of our sins before we can be saved. In the '60s, this nation took a first step toward admitting that it was wrong on race; the result was an explosion of creativity and humanity."

That was it. The essence of the '60s was that for a moment this nation moved in a humane direction.

This society has never had "room" for people of color. Because it was built on inhumane principles, there has never seemed to be enough for everybody. So people of color get left out. That explains today's depressing statistics that define "institutional racism"—the fact that people of color have only half as much of the good things of life as whites (such as health care, jobs, and education) and twice as much of the bad things (such as prison cells, unemployment, and slums).

In a sense the civil rights movement was people of color saying to the society, "Make room for us." In so doing, they stretched it for everyone. But it was an unfinished revolution. The freedom movement of that period accomplished monumental things, but it was just beginning to deal with economic justice when it was stopped short, I believe deliberately, by those who realized that it threatened their power. The result was that the entire society turned away from humane values and the needs of people were pushed into the shadows.

ALL THIS SUGGESTS that only as white America begins again to deal with racism can it move in creative directions. The hopeful thing today is that this seems to be happening. White Americans are discovering racism again. For many of us, the issue never went away and one wonders where people who are rediscovering it spent the '70s and early '80s. But the important thing is that they are coming back.

This potential new birth of freedom must have political expression. I believe that existed in the Rainbow Coalition. I spent time and energy in 1988 working to elect Jesse Jackson as president of the United States. Not just because it is good that we have a black candidate, but because the fact of that blackness—the struggle it represents—offers the only hope for uniting all those who long for a humane society and can therefore move us in that direction.

We may fail. But I never asked assurance that the freedom movement would prevail in my lifetime. We are trying to undo 400 years of wrong history. It is enough to be a part of that long chain of struggle that stretches into the past and will go on into the future long after we're gone. ■

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AN INTEREST IN EQUALITY

WHITE PEOPLE'S PLACE IN THE RAINBOW

by Danny Duncan Collum

FROM THE TIME when slaveholder Thomas Jefferson failed to do the right thing at Monticello, on down to the very present, the relationship between white dissident movements and black America has been a tangled, complex, and often problematic one. Through the centuries of the American story, black interests have been consistent. But white interests have fluctuated, and white support for black aspirations has fluctuated with them. The history of these relationships has been especially shifty due to the very different interests of the different sorts of white people who have, at different times, either sought, or found themselves in, alliance with black America.

We, of all colors and classes, are inheritors of that history, and of its contradictions. Most progressive whites will locate their forebears in that history of relationship and struggle in the historical stream epitomized by the white abolitionists of the mid-19th century. The abolitionists comprised a largely educated and affluent movement heavily concentrated in America's Northeast quadrant. Later successors of the white abolitionists were found among the Northern liberal whites who went south in support of the black freedom movement of the 1960s.

RACIAL UNITY HAS SOMETIMES WORKED BEST WHEN IT IS NOT A MORALISTIC SENTIMENT BUT A LIBERATING MEANS TO A LARGER END.

In both historical instances, relatively privileged whites publicly identified themselves with the defense of African-American human rights. This defense was stated in terms of detached moral judgment, or idealism, or conscience, to coin a catch phrase. These two interracial episodes, abolitionism and the civil rights movement, represent the historical ground that we white folks in the Christian peace and justice movement tend to claim as our precedents and to hold up as high-water marks in the development of a religiously rooted movement for social change in America. They comprise the grid through which we conceive politics, race, history, and our places in them.

This perspective is a valuable one. But one with distinct limitations. For one thing it leaves out of white dissident view the whole parallel history of the nationalist tradition within African America. It also omits another, quite different, stream of interracial cooperation for social change in American history. This is the tradition represented by the populist and radical labor movements of the turn of the century and the 1930s in which black, white, and other workers, farmers, and unemployed people joined together in coalitions of shared self-interest.

This other stream is of equal importance with the abolition-civil rights tradition, and it would behoove white middle-class or new-class dissidents to consider it with equal weight. This other stream is usually of less interest to white religious dissidents because "people like us" played less of a role in it. But in the 1990s of America's culturally turbulent economic decline, this other stream of interracial action, which represents the intersection of ethnic and economic interests, may be more relevant than ever.

IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY, America was undergoing wrenching social and economic transformations. Slavery had ended. The South was in ruins. Industrialization and mechanization were the order of the day. It was the age of inventions, and the furious rush of new technologies into the marketplace was fueling the growth of huge industrial financial empires and rendering whole industries and their workforces obsolete.

In the Northern cities, this turmoil resulted in the first great wave of labor organizing drives and in widespread strikes and confrontations. In the rural Midwest and South, small farmers, and small businesspeople who depended on the farm trade, united under the banner of the Peoples (or Populist) Party to defend themselves against the overwhelming power of the big-city banks and large Eastern trading houses.

In the South recently freed, and still-enfranchised, African Americans formed much of the potential populist constituency. The rest was comprised of the poorest, least-educated, and thus most bigoted whites. At great pains, and against great odds, populist organizers managed to forge an alliance between these two groups of the disinherited and to build an organization in which lower-class whites and blacks of the South stood shoulder to shoulder sharing leadership and risks in a struggle for

Kathe Kollwitz

social, economic, and political equality.

Eventually the populist movement was crushed by an alliance of the old landed aristocracy and the Yankee captains of finance and industry. Afterward, at the end of the 19th century, the Southern states enacted the first Jim Crow laws, which mandated separation of the races, and other measures, including the poll tax and the literacy test, to effectively disenfranchise blacks and many poor whites. These measures were designed to ensure that nothing like the populist rebellion would ever arise again.

THE SYSTEM of industrial capitalism, born in the late 19th century, seemed in the 1930s to be in its terminal crisis. More than a fourth of the nation was unemployed. Families were shattered, homelessness was common, and hunger was widespread.

Again movements arose on the Left to defend the interests of farmers, workers, and the unemployed. In the Northern cities, unemployed councils waged militant direct action campaigns for welfare rights and against evictions. In the mines and factories, the unions of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) took root and flourished. Again, in these struggles, blacks and whites of varying places and circumstances found that their common interests and common plight often outweighed questions of petty prejudice or social custom.

Grassroots organizing during the 1930s was heavily influenced by the role of the U.S. Communist Party which seemed, to many at the time, to represent the best available vehicle for fulfilling America's democratic promise. During this period the Communists gave heavy emphasis to black human rights and equality. Blacks were promoted to high positions in the leadership of the party. All communist-influenced unions and other organizations were required to encourage black participation. And the party went beyond social equality to call for black self-determination including the possible establishment of a separate majority-black nation in the Deep South.

Meanwhile, down in Dixie, a small group of Socialist Party activists were organizing the poorest of the Southern poor into a biracial Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU). The STFU gained nationwide publicity for its strikes and direct-action campaigns on behalf of hungry farmers and farmworkers. Throughout the period it maintained interracial solidarity under the heaviest pressures and in the worst possible circumstances. The STFU even attempted to establish a biracial cooperative in the Mississippi Delta.

IN 1968 DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. was attempting to write another chapter in this history of interracial struggle. King's last project, the Poor Peoples Campaign, was intended to forge an alliance of shared self-interest among white, black, red, and brown low-income Americans on behalf of radical social and economic reforms that would benefit them all.

The Poor Peoples Campaign came as a response to an organizational crisis in a civil rights movement threatened by too many too-small victories and the subsequent loss of public interest, political allies, financial support, and momentum. While acknowledging the healthy impulses behind the "Black Power" go-it-alone strategy, King knew that the movement needed white allies. But after voting rights and public accommodations access were won, the movement's white Northern liberal allies began to go their own way.

King saw this drift as inevitable, and, in addition to reaching out to America's other marginalized minorities, he turned to the cultivation of some very different white allies, for example, the white poor and white workers in the union movement and among the unorganized. This alliance was to be the very keystone of the Poor Peoples

Movement. Vincent Harding has recalled Dr. King in those last days stating that the truest form of racial integration would come from working together at a common task in a common struggle on behalf of shared needs and interests.

THE POINT TO UNEARTHING THIS stream of U.S. racial history is not to beat again the nearly dead horse of guilt-stricken and impotent middle-class liberalism. The point is simply to note that racial unity has sometimes worked best when it is not a moralistic sentiment but a liberating means to a larger end. In fact, it can be argued that integration as end-in-itself is in part a means of social control by white elites. It functions as such to the degree that it diverts African-American aspirations with half-measures, dilutes black power by co-opting potential leaders out of the African-American community and into white-led institutions, and sets working-class blacks and whites to war against each other in those very places—like public schools, workplaces, and trade unions—which should serve to unite them and advance their common economic and political interests.

We should recall in this regard that integration, or desegregation, as such was never a civil rights movement goal in and of itself. In movement discourse the goals were always much more broadly and bluntly stated: Freedom. Equality. Justice. Power. Now.

Everyone knew that the movement was not just about access to lunch counters, per se, but about unobstructed access to the social, political, and economic levers of power. These levers are the tools that might allow freeborn women and men of all races to shape the terms of their existence. They consist of things such as jobs, education, self-determining organizations, and the ballot.

In the state of Mississippi, except in the very earliest days, the locally rooted Freedom Movement by deliberate choice rarely even raised the question of shared public accommodations. Instead the movement in Mississippi focused on voting rights, jobs, and the organization of co-ops, Freedom Schools, and Head Start centers. Which is to say that it focused on political empowerment and economic survival.

Of course, racial intermingling freely pursued in an atmosphere of mutuality and equality is, as a goal in and of itself, also a good in and of itself. For Christians, pursuing such pan-racial moments is one of the ways in which we can bear witness to the ultimate truth of Christian community and human unity under God. That is a truth that is ultimately greater than the also true truths about our cultural, national, or racial particularities. Contexts in which people of different backgrounds can focus on transcendent ideals is, in fact, as Jackie DeShannon used to sing, "what the world needs now."

THAT SAID, IT MUST ALSO BE noted that there are issues to be faced in the forging of a viable multiracial, multicultural democracy in America which do not, in this present age, necessarily yield to transcendent ideals or religious good feeling. Additionally, out in the marketplace motives are never so pure as they might be in a faith context. And to make our spiritual oneness real and concrete in the marketplace, that unity must be mediated through effective economic and political institutions and through negotiated trade-offs of various self-interests.

One of the best contributions "conscious," or self-conscious, or conscientious white folks can make to that process is to be clear, beginning with ourselves, about where our interests lie, about why we do what we do, and about how our own interests are served by the things we do. Because they are. However much we may claim that we are acting, and even try to act, purely in a posture of sacrifice on behalf of others, if we're honest we'll usually discover that our "sacrifice" is at least combined with, if not perhaps masking, some other form of self-gratification, and not always a healthy one.

Those are simply the observable facts of human nature. Everybody has self-interest. Everybody acts, most of the time, in their own self-interest—whether egotistic or enlightened. And those who don't admit those facts are doomed to careen uselessly through life projecting their unexamined self-interest on to other people's problems and making a mess.

Racial integration as a panacea has too often masked white liberal (or radical) self-interests behind abstractions. It may be that our interest is served by the generation of good feeling, or by the search for "authenticity" in the cultural and religious resources of black or other Third World traditions. Or we may be seeking self-validation among a minority community to salve the pain of rejection and marginalization among our own people. None of those are necessarily bad things when you put them out on the table. They're only bad when they are masquerading as altruism.

Once we've cleared the air of all our hidden agendas, we might discover that there is a better goal, or a better name for our goals, than the ideas and language of integration or even reconciliation. I would suggest that the better idea might be democracy. That is the realization of each individual's and group's just aspiration toward self-determination, self-governance, and self-respect.

The attainment of a multicultural American democracy is something that we many stripes of the rainbow can only achieve together—and separately. I once heard Rev. Joseph Roberts of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, point out that in a rainbow all of the different colored stripes maintain their own special identity. But, he emphasized, they all bend in the same direction.

Democracy, equality, and self-respect: These ideas should form an arc big enough to encompass all of our legitimate self-interests. A coalition formed around such notions could unite everyone except those very few whose pursuit of unlimited profit seems to require an American electorate, and workforce, torn and deluded by racial alienation and inequality. ■

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REDISCOVERING A HERITAGE LOST

A EUROPEAN-AMERICAN ANTI-RACIST IDENTITY

by Joseph Barndt and Charles Ruehle

In the mid-1960s, a young white pastor was working on the South Side of Chicago as a community organizer, while also participating in the civil rights demonstrations led there by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. During that time, the pastor became increasingly aware of the racism of the white society. The more he learned, the guiltier he felt about being white and the more alienated he felt from the white society. He hated other white people and he hated being white.

In reaction, he tried very hard to deny his white identity. Without even consciously choosing to do so, he tried to "act" black—to talk like blacks, walk like blacks, and even to think about himself as being black. He eventually came to realize how silly it looked and sounded for him to do this. At the time, however, it had been a desperate attempt to disassociate himself from his whiteness.

To his great fortune, one day a black friend made him stand in front of a mirror and, in no uncertain terms, reintroduced him to himself as a white person. The young pastor was confronted with the fact that hating white people was an act of self-hatred. He was taught that he needed to deal with his whiteness and learn to accept, and even to love, himself and white people if he was ever going to learn to deal with the issue of racism.

IF CULTURAL IDENTITY IS WHAT WE LOST IN ORDER TO BECOME WHITE, THEN CULTURAL IDENTITY IS POSSIBLE ONLY WHEN WE ARE NO LONGER DEFINED IN TERMS OF OUR WHITENESS.

Many of us have similar stories to share about our racial "awakening" as whites. We hope we've come a ways from those days of self-loathing. Presumably, we have increased and more finely tuned our passionate hatred for white racism, but we no longer deny our white identity. We may have, in fact, consciously and carefully developed a deep and abiding love for ourselves and for our brothers and sisters who are white. And yet, most of us are still a long way from being satisfied or at peace with our white identity.

As anti-racism educators and trainers, we have struggled with identity issues. We feel that those of us who are white but who oppose white racism must pose the question of how to achieve a redeemed and transformed racial cultural identity in whose being and action we can have pride.

We know there are others who are on this quest for shaping a new white identity—or as we will argue in this article, a new European-American identity. We share our reflections in an attempt to identify some initial steps, and to define some directions for our common search.

SETTING THE CONTEXT • There are three important contexts for our exploration of a new white identity. The first is the unabating sin of white racism. For five centuries our racism has oppressed and destroyed people of color and eroded the very foundations of our society. Even today, it contaminates virtually every aspect of personal and societal life in our nation.

Individual, institutional, and cultural racism controls and limits the lives of all people of color, while providing illegitimate power and privilege for the dominant white society. Every white person in America is willingly or unwillingly a participant in and a beneficiary of systemic white racism. Since an enormous amount of energy is consumed by white Americans to cover up, deny, or escape from this reality, we must guard against our using this exploration of a new white identity for these same evasive purposes.

The second context is the fact that people of color have resisted racism. Despite the indescribable suffering, degradation, and death of millions of people, Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos have struggled against oppression and they have survived. As a result, racism has not been triumphant in its attempt to destroy them. And people of color have not lost the hope and the vision of overcoming racism.

Nor is resistance to racism an unfamiliar impulse for white people. We were not born racists. As children, many of us resisted the role of oppressor. But, through family, church, school, and community pressure, we were programmed to conform to white cultural racist standards and behavior. Adults who reject this role are labeled as

traitors of the white race, and many have been subjected to threats, physical violence, and death.

Despite this, many white people have participated in the struggle against racism. Buried beneath the pages of recorded history are uncounted acts of dissent on the part of many white people. This reality is very important to our search for a new white identity. We need to acknowledge and celebrate that these acts of resistance to racism are not simply anomalies or individual exceptions to an otherwise evil race of people. Instead they represent an alternative understanding of who we are and can be.

OUR TASK IS TWOFOLD: TO DISCOVER IMPORTANT PARTS OF OUR HERITAGE THAT HAVE BEEN LEFT BEHIND, AND TO INTERPRET OUR HISTORY IN TERMS OF OUR ANTI-RACIST AND FAITH-BASED VALUES.

The third context is the increasing attention being given to the issue of cultural identity and to our potential for building a multicultural society in the United States. Contrary to the irrational claims of racism, it is cultural identity and not race that forms the primary differences and distinction among groups of people. And it is in the interrelationships of our cultural identities that we are seeking to build an inclusive and diverse society.

There are five major cultural groups in the United States, with many subcultures existing within each one of them: Native American, African American, Latino American, Asian American, and European American or "white." As we explore the question of our white identity, we shall see how this question of our cultural identity and our contribution to a multicultural table are issues that we need to address.

THE PROBLEM WITH WHITE IDENTITY • What is cultural identity, and why is it so important? Our cultural identity, more than anything else, defines our way of life. Along with national and ethnic identity, it is what makes one group of people distinct from another. Culture is far more encompassing than race. Although racial identity is usually included as part of one's cultural identity, it cannot, by itself, define one's culture.

Culture is shaped by a people's experience, history, and common memories; by values and patterns of life; by heroes and heroines; by songs and dance. Cultural identity is inherited as a given, and it is also continually being reshaped and made new by daily experience. It is communicated by parents and peers, church and school, and primarily, by television.

It is crucial to recognize that cultural identity is not the same as cultural heritage. When white people are asked to speak about our culture, we quite often refer to some aspect of our European heritage: German music, Scandinavian food, Russian dance, Irish folklore. These traditions are a rich and valuable part of our history, but they do not define our cultural identity.

Instead, our cultural identity refers to our current way of life. It is derived, far more, from what happened to our European forebearers after they reached the United States, and to what their sons and daughters and grandchildren accomplished after them.

And there, of course, is the rub. Very little of our European cultural heritage has an identifiable influence on the way we live today. And the American culture that has taken its place leaves very much to be desired. This is not just a complaint about the lack of depth in a culture defined by Mickey Mouse and McDonalds. Somewhere in the past 500 years of history, our European heritage has been lost.

Europeans did not become European Americans. Rather, they became white. It is not accurate—given this loss of heritage—to refer to ourselves as European Americans. We are white people. Simply put, the difficulty with our cultural identity is that being white has become a way of life.

We share this perspective not as a condemnation of who we are, but rather as a painful awareness of our limitations caused by who we are not. We recognize the need for our cultural identity to be reborn. The brokenness of our white identity means we are separated from sisters and brothers of color. Because of this separation, we are unable:

- to claim our identity as members of the family of God—one family—the human race.
- to claim our cultural identity as Americans, for American has become another word for white, with everyone else noted as an exception: African American, Latin American, Asian American, Native American.
- to claim our riches and power as legitimate expressions of identity. Instead, they have become expressions of white skin privilege.
- to celebrate with pride the accomplishments of our history or honor our national heroes, for we have learned of the genocide and destruction upon which the foundations of our nation have been built.

In light of this awareness, let us be clear that the problem with racism is not just what it has done to others. It is also what racism has done to ourselves. We need to challenge the unspoken assumptions that we as white people have gained as a result of racism, and that we will lose if racism is dismantled. The opposite is true. Individually, institutionally, and culturally, we have been subjugated and dehumanized by our own racism.

Intentional and unintentional programming at an early age prepares us to accept as natural a white world of power and privilege. Not only is the place and role of people of color limited and controlled, but our own identity is defined in terms of the color white. As adults, changing this worldview requires the traumatic unlearning of internalized distortions and lies about ourselves and about other people.

The longer we live in white isolation, accepting our white-skin privilege, consciously or unconsciously believing that we are superior, the more difficult it is to recover our humanity. We regain our identity only if racism is dismantled. In coming to believe this, the fight against racism truly becomes in our self-interest.

The search for a new cultural identity begins with rejecting a racist white identity, along with the power and

Paul Willis

privilege that come with it. If cultural identity is what we lost in order to become white, then cultural identity is possible only when we are no longer defined in terms of our whiteness.

Perhaps a parallel illustration will be helpful. The term "African American" has recently been popularly accepted as a more accurate name and description of those who, throughout the centuries, have been designated by others in terms of their color, i.e.: "black," "Negro," or "colored." There is not such a thing as a "black culture," any more than there is a white culture. The term African American, however, has a clear meaning, designating a people's way of life and a cultural identity that has been created out of a past heritage and a present experience. In the same way, a transformed European-American cultural identity will be built upon a new examination of our history and present experience.

SOMEWHERE IN THE PAST 500 YEARS OF HISTORY, OUR EUROPEAN HERITAGE HAS BEEN LOST. EUROPEANS DID NOT BECOME EUROPEAN AMERICANS. RATHER, THEY BECAME WHITE.

A NEW CULTURAL IDENTITY • We believe there to be five characteristics necessary for a transformed European-American cultural identity. Others may wish to modify these or add to them. Our hope is that they will contribute to a new direction for our common journey.

AN ANTI-RACIST IDENTITY • A commitment to anti-racism is the first characteristic of a transformed European-American cultural identity. Only those who understand the nature of systemic white racism and have a deep and persistent commitment to combat and dismantle it can proceed to a deeper level of exploring white identity.

For most white Americans, an initial reaction to the realization of white racism is either a debilitating guilt or the pretense that one can become a non-racist. We can become travelers on the road to a new white cultural identity only when we are able to accept the reality of our racist identity and begin to participate in collective efforts to combat and dismantle racism.

As Robert Terry, anti-racism trainer and author, states in *Impacts of Racism on White Americans*: "I am not personally offended when someone says being white in America makes me a white racist. That is true. I am offended, however, if someone says that is all that I am. That is not true. I am both a racist and an anti-racist, and, as an anti-racist, strongly committed to the elimination of racism."

This factor is so important to the integrity of our undertaking that the word "anti-racist" should take the place of "non-racist" in our vocabulary. It becomes the adjective that modifies every other part of our identity. To be most clear, we must speak for example, of *anti-racist* school systems, *anti-racist* churches, *anti-racist* political candidates, and the like. And we need to emphasize that we are seeking a new *anti-racist* white identity and culture.

A FAITH-BASED IDENTITY • The second characteristic of our anti-racist European-American culture is that it is based upon the redeemed identity we have received as baptized Christians. Before bringing our new anti-racist identity and culture to interfaith and secular arenas, we need to be fed and nurtured in the context of our Christian community.

We need to grow in our understanding of a God who has redeemed and transformed us and has already given us a new identity. Our God has torn down the walls of hostility between us and is creating a new humanity in which we are all one in Jesus Christ. We can find great strength of purpose in our baptismal identity and deep calling in the use of our lives to resist evil and build a new world of love and justice.

At the same time, we cannot deny the existence of racism in the church. Like all American institutions today, the church is a segregated instrument of the forces of racism. Even when seeking to fulfill its prophetic and redemptive role, it often lacks the courage to speak and act the whole truth to its own people, let alone to the world.

We need to be aware that the very birthplace of our transformed, anti-racist identity can also be the source of resistance to our anti-racist efforts. While we work to create a new anti-racist white identity and culture in other areas of our nation, we must not forget our responsibility to work for this same transformation in the church.

A NEW HISTORICAL IDENTITY • Our collective cultural identity is built upon many layers of historical experience. It is not only that which actually took place in the past that forms our present identity, but also those experiences that are selected or rejected as important, and the meaning that is given to them.

Our forebearers brought to the United States a great diversity of European ethnic and national identities. That diversity, combined with the experiences of the past 500 years, has been selectively preserved in memory and reinterpreted in ways that define who we are today.

Our task then is twofold: to discover important parts of our heritage that have been left behind, and to interpret our history in terms of our anti-racist and faith-based values. We need to reject the sense of victorious triumph that is associated with conquest, destruction, and oppression. We must also turn from previous patterns of horizontal oppression practiced by our white culture that judge some European Americans as better than other European Americans. In their place we can establish a new sense of pride in those accomplishments of our forebearers that reflect resistance to racism, repentance from wrongdoing, payment of restitution, and building of communities of justice and equality.

Perhaps the most exciting task is to discover new white heroes and heroines with whom we can identify and use as role models. We can celebrate the accomplishments of these people in our religious and civic ceremonies. They need to be placed on our liturgical calendars, represented in our storytelling, portrayed in our artwork, displayed in our classrooms, recognized in our homes. We can place them alongside our growing list of African American, Native American, Asian American, and Latino

heroes and heroines who are also role models for developing our new cultural identity.

D. Michael Hostetler

A NEW EUROPEAN-AMERICAN IDENTITY • We now have the ingredients to create a new American identity for descendants of European immigrants: a reclaimed heritage, a transformed view of history, and a faith-based commitment to dismantle racism. With these, we can design and give birth to a European-American cultural identity.

We can create art and music that express a new ability to love ourselves and others. We can develop dance forms that express new freedom of movement and willingness to reach out and touch. Our understanding of politics and power can reflect a desire for true participatory democracy. Inside our ghettoized, self-constructed white prisons, a new freedom can be born. We can emerge from behind our suburban walls and our well-guarded city apartment doors. We can let go of our guilt, fear, and self-protection, and begin to replace it with a self-confidence that reaches out to embrace others.

We need to nourish this new cultural identity with a sense of joy and pride, and exercise our new abilities in the world around us. While working for the continuing transformation of our people, we can contribute to the building of a racially just society.

A MULTICULTURAL IDENTITY • Finally, the fifth characteristic of our new anti-racist European-American cultural identity is the commitment and ability to participate at a multicultural table. The decisions and actions of a new anti-racist America must take place in a truly inclusive multicultural setting.

Multiculturalism, however, can have many meanings, and is easily distorted and misused. We are not advancing the kind of multicultural programs, used by many of our nation's private institutions and corporations, that resemble a form of warmed-over integration efforts. Such programs seek to assimilate people of color into white-controlled systems without working to dismantle racism or to alter power structures. The first commitment of programs for multicultural inclusiveness and diversity must be to dismantle the racism in the institutional structures. That which takes its place must be a shared power structure built into the institution's foundation.

Nor can we identify with those institutions that simply have substituted the word "multicultural" for those formerly called "minorities," thereby causing even greater segregation and ghettoization of our society. The multicultural table is representative of all racial and cultural groups.

At the same time, it is understandable that people of color have been extremely hesitant about our presence at the multicultural table. They have had no reason to trust our white racist identity. Thus, an even more urgent purpose for nurturing our anti-racist European-American cultural identity is to bring a valid contribution to the multicultural table where a racially just society and world is being born. ■

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STUDY SESSION 4 / QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. How did you first learn about racism? Did you ever witness any racial incidents as a child? Did you ever participate in them? What were some of your early experiences in confronting your own racism or in dealing with the racism of your family, friends, or church? What were your early experiences in meeting and talking with people from a different racial background?

2. Jim Wallis recounts his early journey of trying to understand the racism of his church. What has been your experience in your present church or in other churches regarding their willingness to deal with racism?

3. Were your early experiences of law enforcement officers similar to those of Jim Wallis or to those of his friend Butch? What other perspectives may differ based on the experiences caused by one's race?

4. Have you ever been part of an interracial group or movement that was based on shared needs and interests? Did it function different from coalitions built solely on the conscience or concern of one community? How was it different?

5. According to Danny Duncan Collum, integration in and of itself was not a civil rights movement goal. What has integration meant for communities of color? For white people? How have attempts toward integration been successful? How have they been detrimental? How have they been misguided?

6. Danny Duncan Collum calls on white liberals to clarify where their own interests lie and examine how they benefit from what they do. He suggests that what may be intended as sacrifice can be, in fact, masked self-gratification. How do you respond to this perspective? How can good intentions be molded into helpful activity?

7. Joseph Barndt and Charles Ruehle address the distinction between cultural identity and cultural heritage. How do you see these distinctions?

8. How can the assumptions that white people gain through racism and lose through the dismantling of racism be challenged?

9. What is the difference between the adjectives "non-racist" and "anti-racist"? Why is it crucial to create anti-racist institutions?

10. In what ways has struggling with racism been a painful process for you? In what ways have you avoided the challenge to confront racism on a deeper level?

11. Who are some of your white, anti-racist heroes and heroines? How do you celebrate their lives and work?

12. What evidence do you see that this nation is or is not moving in a more humane direction?

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PIONEERS *in* RACIAL JUSTICE

▲ AT MANY SIGNIFICANT MOMENTS, God's work in people's lives and in history has come together to bring about change. It is important to learn from these times in history and to learn from the people that God has used in powerful ways. By reflecting on our past experience, we can prepare for the future that God is surely preparing.

The articles in this chapter provide an understanding of God's presence in the lives and work of Sojourner Truth, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Fannie Lou Hamer, Thurgood Marshall, and Myles Horton. These pioneers in racial justice have often been considered a threat by institutions and individuals within our society. While their vision is not yet complete, they call to us from the past and lead us into the future, moving us beyond the superficial analysis of racism often given in our society.

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A DREAM OR A NIGHTMARE?

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. AND MALCOLM X: SPEAKING THE TRUTH ABOUT AMERICA

by James H. Cone

"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed, 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.' I have a dream that one day...sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood....This is our hope....With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day....This will be the day when all God's children will be able to sing with new meaning, 'My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing.'"

–MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.
August 28, 1963

"No, I'm not an American. I'm one of the 22 million black people who are victims of Americanism, one of the...victims of democracy, nothing but disguised hypocrisy. So, I'm not standing here speaking to you as an American, or a patriot, or flag-saluter, or a flag-waver—no, not I! I'm speaking as a victim of this American system. And I see America through the eyes of the victim. I don't see any American dream. I see an American nightmare!"

–MALCOLM X
April 3, 1964

These quotations represent sharply contrasting views of America by the two most influential black leaders during the 1960s. Martin Luther King Jr., the unquestioned leader of the civil rights movement, was an integrationist and a Christian minister who, during most of his ministry, saw America as "essentially a dream...as yet unfulfilled," "a dream of a land where [people] of all races, of all nationalities and of all creeds can live together as brothers [and sisters]."

Malcolm X, the unquestioned spokesperson for the disinherited black masses of the Northern ghettos, was a separatist and a Muslim minister who viewed America as a realized nightmare in which black people experience "political oppression," "economic exploitation," and "social degradation" at the hands of white people.

Martin's unrealized dream and Malcolm's persistent nightmare: These two ideas of America collided in the 1960s. Today they both stand in judgment over a third idea, of which former president Ronald Reagan became the symbol and advocate.

For Reagan and his supporters, including many involved in George Bush's administration, America is a dream that has already been realized. Even though they would admit, at the right time and in the appropriate context, that there are some shortcomings in the United States, they deeply believe that America is a land of opportunity for all who are prepared to work hard, trust God, and support a strong defense budget in order to protect the free world from the enemies of democracy, freedom, and the free market.

As we scramble for resources to combat the Reaganaut fantasy—which ignores the existence of poverty and of sexual and racial discrimination—we should not overlook these two great freedom-sayers and freedom fighters of our recent past: Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. Their lives and ideas reveal to us not only some significant insights about the America of the 1960s, but even more important, they tell us something about this country today, something that will be useful in our efforts to create a better society and a more humane world.

'I HAVE A DREAM'

Martin Luther King Jr. derived his idea of the American dream from two sources: the American liberal democratic tradition, as defined by the Declaration of Independence

and the Constitution, and the biblical traditions of the Old and New Testaments, as interpreted by Protestant liberalism and the black church. From these two sources, during the first half of the 1960s, King defined what he meant by the American dream, and what must be done in order to make the dream become a concrete historical reality.

According to King the American dream has been summarized in the often-quoted words of the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident—that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

John Spragens Jr.

Martin Luther King Jr.

Two concepts in the statement attracted King to it: its "amazing universalism" and its "divine origin." As Martin Luther King Jr. said so often, "It does not say some men, but it says all men, which includes black men. It does not say all Gentiles, but it says all men, which includes Jews. It does not say all Protestants, but it says all men, which includes Catholics." And I am sure that if Martin were living today, he would insist that, although it says "all men," we must interpret the word "men" generically, that is, as "people" so as to include women.

Martin King realized that, while government officials past and present have proclaimed eloquently the American dream with beautiful words about freedom and equality, they have often enacted laws of slavery and racial segregation that shattered the dream. Slavery and segregation have been strange paradoxes in a nation founded on the principle that all people are created equal. This is "America's dilemma," its "schizophrenic personality."

In relation to its inhabitants of color, America has defaulted on its promise of freedom: "Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check; a check which has come back marked 'insufficient funds.'" But Martin King "refused to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt" and challenged everyone to make the U.S. government cash the check that will bring "the riches of freedom and the security of justice" to all its citizens.

BECAUSE KING REFUSED TO ACCEPT America's "anemic democracy," he challenged its citizens to make the American dream a reality. First, he urged Americans to "develop a world perspective." There is no way that the American dream can be realized apart from the "larger dream of a world of brotherhood [and sisterhood], and peace, and good will." We cannot be free in America unless people are free in Central America and South Africa.

King said it like this: "We must all learn to live together as brothers [and sisters], or we will all perish together as fools. We must come to see that no individual can live alone; no nation can live alone."

When he remembered that the U.S. government "spend[s] more than a million dollars a day to store surplus food," Martin said to himself and to the world: "I know where we can store that food free of charge—in the wrinkled stomachs of the millions of people who go to bed hungry at night."

Martin King believed deeply that all "life is interrelated." We are all—black and white, poor and rich, men and women, communists and capitalists—interdependent, and no person or nation can be free or at peace without the bestowal of freedom and peace upon humanity as a whole. He expressed the interconnectedness of life by saying:

Malcolm X

We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied to a single garment of destiny. What affects one directly, affects all indirectly. As long as there is poverty in this world, no [one] can be totally rich even if [they have] a billion dollars. As long as diseases are rampant and millions of people cannot expect to live more than twenty or thirty years, no [one] can be totally healthy....Strangely enough, I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. You can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be.

For Martin King there was nothing more tragic for the American dream than the continued existence of segregation, based on the false idea of inferior and superior races. He saw segregation as a double contradiction. Because it contradicted America's democratic faith, King challenged politicians to enact desegregation laws in all aspects of the society. Because it was a contradiction of Judeo-Christian faith, he called upon religious leaders to rid this nation of its chief moral dilemma by creating the "beloved community," an integrated society. There was nothing more disturbing to Martin King than for white Christians to tolerate segregation in their churches and in the society.

King realized that dreams would remain dreams unless people of good will developed a method for implementing them in the society. That was why he, along with other black ministers, organized the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in January 1957. The stated aim of SCLC was to achieve "full citizenship rights, equality, and the integration of the Negro in all aspects of American life." For Martin King the problem of segregation was much more than a political problem; it was a moral problem. "America," he said, "must rid herself of segregation not alone because it is politically expedient, but because it is morally right!"

King tied the philosophy of nonviolence, as defined by Gandhi and Thoreau, with Jesus' idea of love, as interpreted by black and liberal white Protestants. The two ideas together constituted a theory of nonviolent direct action that King thought could "save the soul of America."

He believed that American politicians were destroy-

ing the moral fiber of the nation by failing to enact desegregation laws, but that Christian ministers were even more at fault. Instead of being uncompromisingly prophetic in their denunciation of segregation and in their support of integration, "All too many have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of stained-glass windows," said King.

In his classic "Letter From Birmingham Jail," King expressed his disappointment with white religious leaders, especially those in the South. "I have heard numerous Southern religious leaders admonish their worshipers to comply with a desegregation decision because it's the law, but I have longed to hear white ministers declare: 'Follow the decree because integration is morally right and because the Negro is your brother.'" He accused the white clergy of "sleeping through a revolution," content to "stand on the sideline and mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities."

THOUGH KING gave many addresses on his idea of the American dream, his most memorable statement is his "I have a dream" speech on August 28, 1963. In the traditions of the prophetic black church and the optimism of liberal Protestantism, Martin King stated his dream with the persuasive oratory of a political philosopher and the sermonic power of a prophetic black preacher.

When we allow freedom to ring...from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: "Free at last. Free at last. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last."

Caught up in the ecstasy of the moment, many Americans of all races left Washington, D.C., that August convinced that the beloved community of integration would soon be realized. But we all know that Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream was deferred by the "white backlash," the rise of black power, the escalation of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, and the "unraveling of America."

Living in Ronald Reagan's nightmare, we were once again compelled to ask, with Langston Hughes:

What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

During the second half of the 1960s, Martin King's dream exploded in the urban ghettos of American cities and on the battlefields of Vietnam. He was forced to acknowledge that his dream had been turned into a nightmare. Martin King's life was cut short by an assassin's bullet as he was struggling to implement the dream, supporting the garbage workers of Memphis while he also prepared for his second march on Washington, D.C.

'I SEE A NIGHTMARE'

DURING THE TIME that Martin King was confidently preaching his American dream, Malcolm X offered a challenging critique of him by proclaiming that America, for the vast majority of blacks, was not a dream but a nightmare. What was the source of Malcolm's judgment?

Malcolm X based his view of America upon the historical fact of slavery, the current reality of segregation, and this country's refusal to recognize the humanity of black people. No promise of equality, no beautiful word about freedom and justice, can serve as a substitute for the bestowal of basic human rights for all people. And because the United States refused to recognize the dignity and worth of black people in its laws, Malcolm could only see the country from the perspective of the nightmare of slavery, the terror of the lynch mob, and the inhumanity of overcrowded, rat-infested urban ghettos in which blacks were forced to live.

Malcolm refused to accept the idea of "second class" citizens. There are slaves and there are citizens—nothing more and nothing less. To Malcolm black people are treated as nothing but 20th-century slaves.

While Martin King spoke from the perspective of faith and the hope that black and white people of good will could create a just and humane society, Malcolm X spoke from the perspective of history, seeing no hope that an appeal to conscience would lead white people to treat blacks and others as human beings. In the language of a street orator, Malcolm said:

Don't change the white man's mind—you can't change his mind, and that whole thing about appealing to the moral conscience of America—America's conscience is bankrupt....Uncle Sam has no conscience. They don't know what morals are. They don't try and eliminate evil because it's evil, or because it's illegal, or because it's immoral; they eliminate it only when it threatens their existence.

SO MALCOLM'S IMAGE OF AMERICA was quite

different from King's. Malcolm's perspective is one that many whites and a large number of middle-class blacks do not like to take seriously, often dismissing his words as the rhetoric of a racist demagogue! Rather, like King, he was a prophet of the black community who told the truth about the black condition in America in clear, forceful, and uncomplicated language. When accused of being an extremist, he replied sharply: "Yes, I'm an extremist. The black race in North America is in extremely bad condition. You show me a black [person] who isn't an extremist, and I'll show you one who needs psychiatric attention."

As much as he wanted to achieve black unity, especially following his break with Elijah Muhammed, Malcolm could not hold back the sharpness of his tongue as he spoke about an American nightmare in the black community of the poor. His impatience with the black middle-class civil rights leaders and his disdain for white liberals were directly related to his solidarity with and love for poor blacks in the ghettos.

How could the desire for integration give poor blacks self-respect when it meant becoming like the people who caused their poverty? How can we urge blacks to love whites when they don't love themselves? Self-respect, dignity, and "somebodyness"—that was what Malcolm taught in place of love of and integration with white society.

Here we see that Malcolm understood the problem of black self-hate more clearly than Martin King did. King grew up in Atlanta's black middle class. He never had to live in the filth of a Northern ghetto; he had never been a hustler and a criminal like Malcolm. Consequently his thoughts about freedom and how to achieve it were derived from the black middle-class integrationist tradition and the Protestant liberal theology of the white schools he attended.

LIKE MARTIN KING'S, MALCOLM'S life was cut short, at the age of 39, by an assassin's bullet. But unlike King, whose birthday has been made a national holiday, Malcolm X is seldom remembered and respected by the society that destroyed him. From the black perspective, America cannot be understood without the analysis of both, and neither of them can be correctly understood without a knowledge of the other. In fact, these two very different men, before they died, acknowledged the validity of each other's insights.

Following the Selma March and his move to Chicago in the fall of 1965, King saw clearly the limitations of his earlier analysis and began to speak more forcefully—without any reference to Malcolm but definitely influenced by him—of the need for black self-esteem and "segregation as a temporary way station to a truly integrated society." At the same time, several months before his assassination, Malcolm toned down his criticisms of black civil rights leaders, went to Selma, and told Mrs. King, at a time when Martin King was in jail, "I want Dr. King to know that I didn't come to Selma to make his job difficult. I really did come thinking I could make it easier. If the white people realize what the alternative is, perhaps they will be more willing to hear Dr. King."

LESSONS FOR THE STRUGGLE

WE MUST NOT romanticize Martin and Malcolm. As all humans, they had their strengths and weaknesses. Our task is to evaluate them critically by seeing them always in relation to each other. They are each other's necessary corrective, for each spoke a truth about America that cannot be rightly comprehended without the other. Martin and Malcolm teach us important things about the black struggle for freedom, which are also important lessons for other communities as well.

MARTIN AND MALCOLM ARE EACH OTHER'S NECESSARY CORRECTIVE, FOR EACH SPOKE A TRUTH ABOUT AMERICA THAT CANNOT BE RIGHTLY COMPREHENDED WITHOUT THE OTHER.

First, Malcolm X taught us that there can be no achievement of black freedom independent of our affirmation of blackness: black self, black action, black culture, and black past. Although this point was never absent in Martin King, it did not receive its proper emphasis until he saw the depth of black self-hate, especially as revealed in the riots of the Northern ghettos and the subsequent rise of black power. Knowledge of and respect for one's history and culture leads to unity among the people. This is a point that Martin and Malcolm taught in their speeches and demonstrated with their lives.

Malcolm realized, before Martin, that black unity must come before any talk about integration with whites. When Martin saw that for most whites integration meant "tokenism"—that is, blacks without power joining whites *with* power—he began to speak strongly in support of the values of black power. Both Malcolm and Martin came to realize that there can be no freedom for blacks prior to our solidarity with each other.

Second, Martin and Malcolm teach us that the achievement of black unity must lead us to reach out to people of other cultures. Martin extended what he had said about the integration of blacks and whites in America to the relations between nations, especially regarding the United States and Vietnam. That was why he could not separate the issues of freedom of blacks in the United States from peace in Vietnam. With Malcolm it is revealing that after his break with the Nation of Islam, he spent more than half of his remaining 11 months in the Middle East, Africa, and Europe, searching for religious and political directions in his attempt to develop a program of black liberation. From his international experiences, he received a new vision of freedom that included the human rights of all.

As important as black nationalism is in our struggle, it cannot be the ultimate goal. The beloved community must remain the goal for which we are striving. On this point Martin was right and Malcolm was wrong. If European history and culture teach us anything, it is the danger of perceiving the world only from the viewpoint of one culture, as if other peoples' histories do not count.

If black or any other peoples define their freedom struggle in terms of the superiority of their culture over others, they will experience a similar fate as whites. A healthy respect for one's culture does not mean disdain

for others. On the contrary, genuine respect for one culture necessarily leads to a similar respect and love for other cultures.

Martin King was right: We are bound to each other—not just blacks with blacks or whites with whites or Mexicans with Mexicans, but all races of people are one human family, made in the image of God for freedom.

Third, Martin and Malcolm teach us the importance of courageous, intelligent, and dedicated leadership. The black community in particular, and poor people generally, are in dire need of such leaders. Too many of their leaders merely talk about freedom for all while gathering the benefits of freedom only for themselves and other middle-class people of their group.

It is well-known that neither Martin nor Malcolm benefited financially from the movements they led, and each paid the ultimate price—death. But they were more than just courageous and dedicated leaders; they were also intellectuals, fiercely committed to the continued development of their minds through a disciplined program of study.

NO PROMISE OF EQUALITY, NO BEAUTIFUL WORD ABOUT FREEDOM AND JUSTICE, CAN SERVE AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE BESTOWAL OF BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL PEOPLE.

Martin King began the development of his mind through formal education, acquiring a Ph.D. in theology by the age of 26. He continued his education during his movement days by attracting the best minds around him, holding many retreats with his staff, debating the issues of nonviolence, civil disobedience, black power, and Vietnam. Malcolm began his intellectual development with a program of reading that he began in prison and continued until his death. Both Martin and Malcolm realized that no people can achieve freedom as long as their leaders are ignorant about how the economic and political systems of the world came into being and how they function today.

One of the chief functions of the leader is to teach the people how to organize themselves for the purpose of achieving their freedom. Organizing for freedom requires thinking about the meaning of freedom and developing a method to implement freedom in the society. Instruction of the young is very important, because they are the bearers of the future.

One of the most serious weaknesses of Martin and Malcolm was their tendency to be too charismatic in their leadership styles, thereby encouraging their followers to bestow on them a messianic image. People began to think that Martin or Malcolm alone would save them, rather than seeing the need for their own involvement in the struggle. Good leaders work themselves out of a job by teaching others to do the work of liberation that was initially begun by professionals. Unfortunately, Martin and Malcolm were not very effective in training others to carry on their work.

And fourth, the most important contribution of Martin and Malcolm was their example of fidelity to the truth and their refusal to give up in despair in the face of difficult and stressful situations. When Malcolm was forced to break with Elijah Muhammed's Nation of Islam, he did not lose hope. Instead, he searched deeply for a religious identity beyond Elijah's narrow sectarian views and for a political identity grounded in Africa.

Malcolm refused to turn his back on his people even when they rejected him as he attempted to develop his new vision of freedom and an organization to implement it. Ironically, he was killed by the blacks he loved because he refused to remain boxed into a narrow nationalism determined exclusively by color.

THE CENTRAL MOTIF OF MARTIN KING'S theology, during his later years, focused not on love as some interpreters have claimed, but on hope. It was a hope grounded in the black Christian tradition, reinforced by his personal faith, that the God of Moses, the prophets, and Jesus does not leave the little ones alone in bondage.

Though King began his ministry with much dependence on the theological ideas he learned at Crozer Seminary and Boston University, the crisis of faith created by the Montgomery bus boycott caused him to realize that education alone is not enough to sustain one in times of trouble.

One night, January 27, 1957, King received an ugly telephone call, threatening his life and the life of his family. He received about 40 such calls daily, but this one caused him to lose his courage, and he wanted to find a way to withdraw quietly from the movement.

He went to the kitchen and prayed: "Lord, I'm down here trying to do what's right. I think I'm right. I think that the cause we represent is right. But, Lord, I must confess that I am weak now; I'm faltering; I'm losing my courage; and I can't let the people see me like this because if they see me weak and losing my courage, they will begin to get weak." At that moment Martin said he heard an inner voice saying to him: "Martin Luther, stand up for righteousness. Stand up for justice. Stand up for truth. And lo, I will be with you even until the end of the world."

The "kitchen experience," as it might be called, represented Martin's appropriation for his personal life of the black faith that he had been taught as a child. It was this faith that sustained him from Montgomery to Memphis, enabling him to carve out hope amid wretched circumstances. When many of his friends and supporters rejected him because of his opposition to President Johnson's war policies, he responded, "I don't care what white person or Negro criticizes me...I must take this stand because it's right."

According to the black religious experience, "If you are right, God will fight your battle." God did not promise that we would not have troubles or that freedom would be easy to achieve. Rather God promised that we would not be left alone in struggle. That is the faith and the hope that sustained Martin King, enabling him to say:

I tell you, I've seen the lightning flash. I've heard the thunder roar. I've felt sinbreakers dashing, trying to conquer my soul, but I heard the voice of Jesus saying, "Still to fight on." He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone. No, never alone. He promised never to leave me. Never to leave me alone. ■

STRUGGLE AND TRANSFORMATION

THE CHALLENGE OF MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

by Vincent Harding

The following article is excerpted from a speech that Vincent Harding gave on October 21, 1983, at a conference titled "The Black Church, the Third World, and Peace," in Atlanta, Georgia.

I could not come to Atlanta for a conference such as this without knowing that I would have to deal with Martin Luther King Jr. and what he means to all of us. Let me begin by sharing a recollection of something that happened in 1968, just a few months after our friend Martin King was assassinated. My wife, Rosemarie Harding, was visiting in the home of two poor, older black women here in Atlanta. In their two-room apartment, up on the wall in the place of honor next to the picture of Jesus, was a picture of Martin Luther King Jr. One of the women told Rosemarie that King had come to her a number of times since his death. That seemed right, and totally at one with the meaning of Martin Luther King Jr. in our lives.

As I have reflected on that, what is also clear, especially in the light of the establishment of the King holiday, is that there is a tremendous danger of our doing with Martin King precisely what we have so often done to Jesus. That is, put him up on the wall and leave him there, or use his birthday as a holiday and an excuse for going wild over buying things, or domesticate him—taking him according to what we want, rather than what he is demanding of us. The temptation is to smooth him off at the edges and forget what the assistant director of the FBI said about him in 1963: "We must mark King now, if we have not done so before, as the most dangerous Negro of the future in this nation." A dangerous Negro, now a national hero. How shall we work with that?

What we have tried to do and are being tempted to do is forget that King was a dangerous Negro, a dangerous black man. He was dangerous in the midst of a society that had chosen to live in a way that was filled with inhumanity to itself and to the rest of humankind. He was dangerous to all of the keepers of the status quo and to all the lovers of a pleasant Christianity. He was indeed, I think, the most dangerous Negro in the future of this nation, partly because, unlike Malcolm X, lots of people didn't realize how dangerous he was, and still don't.

I WOULD LIKE US TO THINK about the Martin King of 1968 and ourselves now, and to ask the question, "Where are we now related to where King was in 1968?" Then we can try to understand the challenge of Martin Luther King Jr.

The last place we see King is in Memphis, Tennessee, not at a conference, convention, or theological consultation, not even on a vacation, but at a place he felt he had to be because garbage collectors needed him to stand with them. And standing with them, he was shot down. That represents one of the first issues we have to deal with as we think about the King of 1968.

One of the reasons he was in Memphis was because he was struggling with the question of poverty in American society. He had been driven by the realities of life in America and elsewhere by his continued relationship to Jesus, who knew what life among the poor was, to grapple with the question of what to do about poverty and unemployment in America. He had not come to any absolutely clear conclusion. But there was no question in King's mind by 1967-68 that poverty in American society—whether for black people or Native Americans or whites or anybody else—would never be adequately addressed without fundamental transformation of the political and economic structures of this society.

WE MUST NEVER ASSUME THAT BECAUSE WE BELIEVE IN LOVE AND NONVIOLENCE WE CANNOT BELIEVE IN REVOLUTION.

What about us? Is King challenging us to realize that this society has structured unemployment into its very well-being? It attains the "highest standard of living in the world" for some of us by making sure that others of us will never have a job. King says, I cannot live at peace with that as a child of God, as a minister of Jesus Christ. I must find a way to see how this society can be restructured much more in the image of the righteousness of the kingdom of God.

How goes it with those of us who talk about the kingdom of God? How goes it with those of us who talk about loving Jesus and loving God and do not in any way deal with the need for a radical analysis of how the children of God are doing in America, and why. Why is America, supposedly the most wealthy nation in the world, filled with millions of people who cannot get work? Is that a Christian question, or is that a question for the economists and the secular humanists? I think King would challenge us to think about that.

TOWARD THE END of his life, King said this: "The dispossessed of this nation—the poor, both white and Negro—live in a cruelly unjust society"; therefore, "they must organize a revolution against that injustice, not against the lives of their fellow citizens, but against the structures through which the society is refusing...to lift the load of poverty."

Martin King was saying many things that challenge us. He was saying for one thing that there are adequate resources, human and natural, for the load of poverty to be lifted. He said this society *refuses* to lift the load of poverty; it insists on structures that will keep the load of poverty. Then society tells us that this is consistent with Christianity and all Christians ought to be capitalists. And we believe them.

Martin King challenges us here. He says this society is unjust because it *chooses* to be unjust, and we must find a way to organize (that dangerous Negro word) a revolution, meaning a radical change in the values of our lives and in the structures of this society that cause injustice. Are we preaching about that yet? Is that in the Sunday school lesson yet? If not, how shall our people be prepared for that which must come?

This is connected to another challenge that King left. One of the last times I saw him was here in Atlanta, in what was then Ralph Abernathy's church, at a gathering that King and others had called together. It was one of the most exciting, stimulating, and scary things I have ever seen. For the first time, Native Americans, blacks, Hispanics, and poor whites were all beginning to talk about the ways in which we might, together, find a way to speak to the poverty that cuts across all racial lines. This was fascinating, for it was moving toward what was to be the Poor People's Campaign.

King was trying to deal with two things there. He was trying to find a way of organizing folks to deal with poverty through some form of revolutionary nonviolence. But more important for us at this particular moment, this was also King's way of dealing with racism in American society.

King said that the way you deal with racism is to find a common vision that will join you together. Find a common task on which those of all races can work together. That is the best way to deal with racism in American society. A thousand conferences will not do what a gathering of people can do when they are convinced that across their racial lines they have a common goal that they must work for, sacrifice for, and die for.

That was the way King was moving toward dealing with racism. Being equal in a society like this was beside the point. He was seeking to organize across racial lines to transform the society, not to be equal in it. As my friend Howard Dodson likes to say, a fundamental difference exists between, on the one hand, seeking equality of opportunity to be exploiters and, on the other hand, participating in struggle across racial lines to create a new non-exploitative society. King was about the latter.

This was hard, and King had to deal with some issues of how his leadership would fit into this kind of multiracial situation. It was clear to him that the heritage of our struggle made it absolutely necessary that black people take the lead in moving toward the transformation of this society. It could not be left to anyone else—neither professional liberals nor professional revolutionaries. Black people, who had come so far, would have to have the courage to keep going and to take leadership for a new day. In other words, to be dangerous Negroes.

BY 1967-68 KING WAS CALLING for a new political and economic order. Is that a Christian agenda? Some Christians doubt it, saying that it is not our concern, it is not our business what this economic order is doing to the lives of other people here and abroad. Yet there is no Christian here who is not quite ready to sit and take the

benefits of the present economic order.

If it is not our business, then we need to leave it and not take its benefits. But if it is our business, then we have got to put our lives in it and decide what shall be done to bring this society some inches closer to the vision of the kingdom of God.

King also said that the black movement was forcing America to face all its interrelated flaws. This is the beautiful thing about what came up from us. It started out as a black movement, and all of a sudden you look around and everything is going on—women, Native Americans, Chicanos, and Gray and Black Panthers were organizing. Everything was rising up because we had begun to tell what we saw from the underside of American society.

The black movement opened up our eyes, and even the mainstream churches began talking about change. King said the black freedom struggle was exposing the evils that are deeply rooted in the whole structure of our society. It was revealing systemic flaws and suggesting that radical reconstruction of society itself is the real issue to be faced, no longer simply black or women's equality.

King, by 1967-68, had seen that what we are faced with is the need for radical transformation of the major institutions of the society, reshaping them with the needs of the poor, rather than the well-to-do, as our primary guide. How do we put that together with people who are telling us now that what black people really have to do is learn how to use the political process—meaning the Democratic and Republican parties?

How do we preach, teach, and pray about this? What message do we get from the living Word about this? We will get no message unless we go seeking, hungering, and thirsting after a message. And we will not go hungering and thirsting if we think that this has nothing to do with being "saved and sanctified and meeting the Lord in glory."

But if being saved means being saved from the blindness of going along with the conformity of this age, if being sanctified means really finding a new righteousness and a new holiness that can be shared with all people, if meeting the Lord in glory means meeting Jesus wherever he is to be found among poor people, then it has everything to do with being saved, sanctified, and meeting the Lord in glory. King challenges us to deal with that.

KING INITIATED A STILL-GROWING LINK between the black church and the Third World. King was pressed into looking at the rest of the non-white world by the war in Vietnam. That war opened up a whole new arena to Martin King, and he came forth from his congregation in Ebenezer Church to Riverside Church in New York City and said that this country, the country that he loved, had managed to get on the wrong side of a world revolution, and it seemed to insist upon staying there. King began talking about Vietnam, about the murderous policies of our nation there. He began lifting that up wherever he went.

Lots of people said to him, "Martin King, you're crazy, because that's not Christian stuff, that's not civil rights stuff, and besides Lyndon Johnson is going to have your behind if you keep doing that." And King said, "I have been fighting against segregation all my life, and I

refuse to segregate my conscience."

Some people can be very excited about black and women's rights in America, but are absolutely silent about what this country is doing to the people of Nicaragua, El Salvador, or Haiti today. King said he could not participate in that kind of moral segregation. In other words, he told us that we who have known what it is to be black in America have a particular responsibility to listen to the cries of those who are non-white and under the American heel all over the world.

Lots of people now in the so-called Third World are asking, "Where do black people in America stand? Have y'all gotten it so good in your middle-class newness that you no longer see, feel, or hear anything about what it costs us in Nicaragua and South Africa, Peru, and the Philippines for you to be well-off in New York and Atlanta?"

I remember well how happy we were in the 1950s and '60s when voices from all over the non-white world came in telegrams, speeches, and lectures, saying, "We are for the black freedom movement in the United States." It's our turn to stand with them—often against our government's anti-revolutionary policies. As the old folks used to say, "God don't like ugly."

But the question is not simply what we are going to say about what our country is doing to the rest of the world. As King saw it, the question is what are we going to do about our own participation in a world of the middle-class, materialistically oriented values that create that kind of exploitation? Is there any way that we who have known oppression in America can hook up with those who have known oppression from America?

In the last year of his life, King proposed that all of those who believe in revolutionary nonviolence in America should try to find the brothers and sisters in Latin America who believe in revolutionary nonviolence and somehow hook up with them. He said that this country has caused so much of the misery in Latin America that we here in this country ought to take special responsibility to connect with the revolutionaries there.

PEOPLE ASKED KING WHY HE WAS concerned about all of these people all over the world who have nothing to do with Negroes in America. He replied, among other things, that it was because King was a minister of Jesus Christ, who loved his enemies so much that he was willing to die for them, and so he had a different way of dealing with enemies than the State Department does. We need to think about that, those of us who want equal access to the State Department.

King went on to say, "I must be true to my conviction that I share with all men (and of course now he would say all people) the calling to be a son (child) of the living God, beyond the calling of race, or nation, or creed. Beyond the calling of race, or nation, or creed is this vocation of sonship (and daughterhood) under God, and because I believe that the Father is deeply concerned especially for the suffering and helpless and outcast children, I come tonight to speak for them." King was suggesting that there may be something that goes even deeper than our Christianity, that our fundamental identity is to be found in our evolving life as children of the living God, who has children everywhere, of every kind, of every religion, of every color.

King moved forward from that theological position because he understood that it is not enough to say that you are going to be a child of God and act as if it doesn't affect your life, your commitment, and the way you see the world. As a child of God, as a minister of Jesus Christ, King recognized that, by and large, America is using its military power to keep the oppressors in place—largely because they support our anti-communist myopia and provide opportunities for our economic and military forces. Therefore, he said, I cannot encourage black young men to go into the military service to support such repressive governments. How about that for a dangerous Negro?

We have to face the personal and collective implications of the fact that King was talking in February and March 1968 about going around to black churches as well as white ones and trying to organize all the young people he could reach as conscientious objectors. What he said, in other words, was equality of opportunity in the U.S. military is not what the black freedom struggle is about. What are we saying about that in our churches? Yes, I know. For so many hundreds of thousands of young people, that is the only place they can get a job, any sense of dignity and responsibility.

I know the military provides one of the most impressive outward appearances of successful integration in our society. But that itself is one of the most terrible things in the world; that a country can give so many of its young people no real work except the work of killing, that a society can provide for significant camaraderie only in the camps of war. And we are silent, or we say go and make a man of yourself. Spare us from such a definition of manhood, for that is part of what has brought us to a nuclear precipice.

But much to our discomfort in the churches, King didn't stop with calling rank and file young people to be COs. He didn't think that black (or white) ministers ought to escape these issues through ministerial exemptions or think that they have it made, morally or financially, by going into the chaplaincy. He was raising the question of how the 17th- or 18th-century Africans or the Indians felt when chaplains came along with the armies of destruction and colonization. He is asking us the same question: Are we going to send chaplains with the armies of oppression in order to help our black young men be better fighters?

We can tell ourselves a lot of other things, but chaplains are there, according to the military definition,

to increase the morale of the fighting forces. Is that what the church of Jesus Christ is meant to be about? I think King would not let us off easily on that one.

Moreover, what King would say to us now, I think, is that there cannot be an authentic, liberating, and visionary peace movement in this country unless black people are going to be part of its leadership. For even the peace movement folks can forget a lot of things about race that they ought not to be allowed to forget, so we had better be right in the middle of the leadership to make clear that peace and justice must be tied together. So King went into the leadership of the peace movement.

WE MUST ALSO RECOGNIZE SOME of the things that King wasn't as clear on and be challenged not only by his strengths, but also by his weaknesses. King left us with the provocative question of how to put together revolution and nonviolence. How do we create a loving, tough, persistent, righteous, justice-seeking revolution? King was struggling with that.

But he was very clear that revolution does not have to be synonymous with people going around shooting each other. So please lay that one aside. The deeper question that we must work on is how shall we prepare ourselves and our people for a struggle that will so transform our way of thinking and being that we will never be comfortable, quiet, or at peace until we have given ourselves to the task of overturning the injustice of this society?

As James Cone says, we must never assume that because we believe in love and nonviolence we cannot believe in revolution. King was grappling with how to put those together. I am quite grateful that he was unclear, because now it opens up to us not a law, not a set of guidelines, but simply a set of questions.

What shall we do? I think that whatever we do, we shall be unfaithful to Martin and to Jesus, to Malcolm and to Fannie Lou Hamer, to all of the great men and women of our time if we do not move forward, pick up these questions, and live out the marvelous tradition of the dangerous Negroes. And I would add all of the friends who want to move with dangerous Negroes, for we invite all of our friends and loved ones to be there and to enter into danger, knowing that "nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ." (You don't have to quote that kind of verse if you ain't up against anything.)

I think finding a way of nonviolent revolution may be one of our greatest challenges. I want to remind you that if you told Gandhi, "But that has never happened before," he would say, "So what? Think of all the things that never happened before they happened."

None of us ever happened before we happened. And yet here we are, happening, right? Lots of things are going to happen that never happened. The question is, Shall we be participating in the creation—with our creator God—of that which has not yet been but must be? Or will we be standing rigidly as frightened agents of the past?

IT IS IN THE SEARCH FOR THE transformation of the people of God that the people of God will be able to participate in the transformation of God's world. We cannot stay as we are and expect to be soldiers in the struggle. King understood that and went on knowing that this was the case.

Four weeks before he died, King talked to the congregation of Ebenezer Church about his unfinished journeys, about his failings, and about his weaknesses. He was speaking for us as well as to us. He was speaking in this case of his life and his own disappointments and failures, and he said we are constantly trying to finish that which is unfinishable. We are commanded to do that, and so we find ourselves in many instances having to face the fact that our dreams are not fulfilled. Life, he said, is a continued story of shattered dreams, but one must strive always to hold that dream in one's heart.

He said there are times that all of us know somehow that there is a Mr. Hyde and a Dr. Jekyll in us. But he said even that truth should not cause us to lose faith in our dreams and our best possibilities. For God does not judge us by the separate mistakes that we make, but by the total events of our life.

So he said, "You don't need to go out this morning saying that Martin Luther King is a saint. Oh no, I want you to know this morning that I am a sinner like all of God's children. I want to be a good man. And I want to hear a voice saying to me one day, 'I take you in and I bless you.'" Then you understand that being a good man, to King, meant being a dangerous Negro.

KING SAID THAT THE WAY TO DEAL WITH RACISM IS TO FIND A COMMON VISION THAT WILL JOIN US TOGETHER, FIND A COMMON TASK ON WHICH THOSE OF ALL RACES CAN WORK TOGETHER.

I began by telling you about a dream, and that's the way I want to end. I had a dream a couple of years ago. In the dream, I was in my home church where I had grown up, on 138th Street in Harlem. I had been away from the church for a while, and I was back in my usual manner rehearsing with the junior choir. While I was singing I became conscious of the fact that, in that empty sanctuary, toward the back pews, someone was sitting. I looked over, and there was Martin, sitting in the pew all by himself. I had never seen King looking so much at peace with himself. Peace, fulfilled as if the journey had finally brought him to a new and magnificent place in his own evolving life.

I took that as a marvelous sign. I offer it as a sign and a challenge to you as well. A challenge to all of us not to worry about where we aren't yet, but to encourage us to move forward beyond where King left off in 1968.

Through some amazing grace that we do not understand, each of us clearly has been granted more time, more grace, more life than King was. Let us use it in the pursuit of the new dream, of the new peace, of the new justice, of the new person, of the new community that the world has not yet seen, but that must be if the world is to continue. ■

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'She Smiles Within My Smile'

THE JOURNEYER FOR TRUTH

by Alice Walker

There are always people in history (herstory) who help us, and whose "job" it is, in fact, to do this.

One way of looking at history (whether oral or written) is as a method that records characteristics and vibrations of our helpers, whose spirits we may feel but of whose objective reality as people who once lived we may not know. Now these people—our "spirit helpers," as indigenous peoples time after time in all cultures have referred to them—always create opportunities that make a meeting with and recognition of them unavoidable.

Sojourner Truth is one such figure for me. Even laying aside such obvious resemblances as the fact that we are both as concerned about the rights of women as the rights of men, and that we share a certain "mystical" bent, Sojourner ("Walker"—in the sense of traveler, journeyer, wanderer) Truth (which "Alice" means in Old Greek) is also my name. How happy I was when I realized this. It is one of those "synchronicities" (some might say the conceits) of such reassuring proportions that, even when I've been tempted to rename myself "Treeflower" or "Weed," I have resisted.

I get power from this name that Sojourner Truth and I share. And when I walk into a room of strangers who are hostile to the word of women, I do so with her/our cloak of authority—as black women and beloved expressions of the universe (i.e. children of God)—warm about me.

She smiles within my smile. That irrepressible great heart rises in my chest. Every experience that roused her passion against injustice in her lifetime shines from my eyes.

This feeling of being loved and supported by the universe in general and by certain recognizable spirits in particular is bliss. No other state is remotely like it. And perhaps that is what Jesus worked so hard to teach: that the transformation required of us is not simply to be "like" Christ, but to *be* Christ.

The spirit of our helpers incarnates in us, making us more ourselves by extending us far beyond. And to that spirit there is no "beginning" as we know it (although we might finally "know" a historical figure who at one time expressed it) and no end. Always a hello, from the concerned spiritual ancestor you may not even have known you had—but this could strike at any time. Never a goodbye. ■

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THE COURAGE TO NAME EVIL

GOD'S CALL TO AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN

by Jacquelyn Grant

There is a great stir about colored men getting their rights, but not a word about the colored women; and if colored men get their rights, and not colored women theirs, you see the colored men will be masters over the women, and it will be just as bad as it was before.

—Sojourner Truth

Sojourner Truth was a woman ahead of her time. This is evident in her life and work and is reflected in the speeches that have survived her. Though in actuality powerless, she projected an image of power. Indeed, Sojourner Truth was a fearless creature. Even in the midst of the most cruel forms of oppression, in which she suffered physical and psychological abuse, Sojourner Truth refused to be silenced. Where she saw evil, she named it; where she experienced contradictions in the society, she identified them; where she saw deception, she exposed it.

Today slavery has been abolished, blacks vote, and women have been enfranchised. Yet oppressive structures continue to exist in our society. Oppression functions in some of the same ways, though it has taken new shapes in our contemporary context.

As in Sojourner Truth's time, black women are still perceived as less than white women, white men, and black men. Black women are still considered to be primarily servants, even as they relate to black men—hence, servants of servants. As they did then, black women's lives represent the point where racism, sexism, and classism converge.

Recognizing this, Sojourner Truth saw the inadequacy of the tendency of many to address only one form of oppression. While remaining a steadfast abolitionist and women's rights advocate, she consistently challenged black men for their sexism, white women for their racism, and white men for both their racism and sexism.

To white women and men, Sojourner Truth raised up the dualism perpetuated in the society's conception of womanhood. More than anyone else, she pointed to the radical differences between the lives of white women and black women. Black women were certainly not accorded the privileges and protections that white women enjoyed.

Sojourner rhetorically asked, "Ain't I a woman?" In this same vein, recognizing that "Negro suffrage" meant black male suffrage, one could say that she was also asking, "Ain't I black?" In other words, Sojourner Truth did what few people were doing—she raised her voice in behalf of black women. It was Sojourner Truth's experience as a black woman that gave her the insight to be broad in her analysis yet concrete at the same time. The complex nature of black women's reality demanded this kind of approach, and it still does.

BLACK WOMEN TODAY WOULD DO well to build upon what Sojourner Truth started in the struggle for black women's liberation. But Sojourner Truth offers an additional challenge for a very specialized group of people—black women in ministry. Though not an ordained minister, she considered herself a preacher—a preacher who, at her commissioning, was given a name indicative of her calling.

God gave her the name "Sojourner" because she was to travel "up an' down the land showin' the people their sins and bein' a sign unto them"; and "Truth" because she was to speak the truth to the people. Having been so commissioned, Sojourner Truth moved about preaching her favorite sermon, which was not mere pietistic rhetoric but an account of her life from the time of her parents' enslavement to the time of her own encounter with Jesus, the one who heard her cries even when no one else would or could.

It was quite clear that Sojourner's social and political justice activities were not for personal gain but attempts to reorder the society so that it might better reflect the will of God. On one occasion, when Frederick Douglass ended a speech in dismay, Sojourner rose and exclaimed, "Frederick, is God dead?" As long as there is God, believed Sojourner, there is hope and assurance for God's people.

Sojourner Truth provided a challenge for black women in general and black women in ministry in particular. To black women she says we must look at black women's reality wholistically. Racism, sexism, and classism cannot be radically separated, but they all must be dealt with as interrelated structures of oppression. Likewise, to black women in ministry, the challenge is that a call from God is one not to a false notion of pietistic spirituality but toward wholistic liberation.

As a black woman theologian in the 20th century seeking to do theology which is meaningful to black women, I find the tradition that Sojourner Truth represents to be most significant in articulating the meaning of the Christian faith for black women—past, present, and future. ■

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'THEN I WILL SPEAK UPON THE ASHES'

NO SILENCING SOJOURNER TRUTH

by Catherine Meeks

When Sojourner Truth was informed that Indiana rebel sympathizers threatened to burn down the hall in which she was scheduled to hold a rally, she said, "Then I will speak upon the ashes."

It is in this tenacious manner that she confronted the difficult and often cruel realities of her life. She learned both from the verbal and the nonverbal messages of her mother that one must not be defeated by the injustice, cruelty, and evil of the world. Her mother, Mau Mau Bett, taught her to pray, to be tough-headed and tough-hearted.

These lessons stood the 9-year-old Isabella in good stead when she was sold away from her parents. The rumors told about her sale claim that her marketability resulted from the fact that she came with a flock of sheep. Regardless of the truth of this story, the fact is that she was bought for $100 by a storekeeper named John Nealy.

Because she spoke only the Low Dutch of her former master, she suffered in the English-speaking Nealy household from not being understood and from not understanding her work instructions. After two years of praying for a better place to live, she was bought for $105, and finally in 1810 she was bought for $300 by John J. Dumont. She was 13 years old. She lived with the Dumonts until gaining her freedom.

Because Sojourner Truth was born black and female, the culture in which she was forced to live intended for her to stand always in the ashes or not to stand at all. But her strength of character and heart set her about the task of transforming that prescription by defying its power to control her and to determine the path that her life could follow.

The image that is created by the words "Then I will speak upon the ashes" conveys the reality of the woman who at age 30 picked up her young child and walked off the Dumont plantation to become Sojourner Truth. The first test came when she set out to find her son, Peter, who had been sold away from her. When she learned that he had been taken to Alabama, she confronted the legal system in her fight to get him returned to her. She won. Of course, she did not seem to realize how extraordinary it was for a black woman to take a white man to court in 1828 and win her case against him.

BECAUSE SHE WAS BORN BLACK AND FEMALE, HER CULTURE INTENDED FOR HER TO STAND ALWAYS IN THE ASHES OR NOT TO STAND AT ALL.

For Sojourner Truth the whole event was merely a matter of a woman of faith who had "right" on her side, fighting for what was her due and having God undergird that fight. Her entire life was undergirded by an unshakable faith that allowed her to turn to God in her words of prayer. She was known to begin most of her addresses with the phrase, "Children, I speak to God and God speaks to me...."

AND, INDEED, she did whether she was confronting the ashes created by the pain of being sold away from her parents as a 9-year-old child, or watching her old, blind, and ill father die of exposure and starvation a few miles from the plantation that had taken the best years of his life but whose owners let him go in his old age because he was a liability.

Sojourner Truth spoke nonverbally as well as verbally to the ashes created by those voices of male criticism that attempted to negate her validity. In one instance men raised questions about her gender, while the white females, who knew that she was a woman, sat silently because of their physical and emotional ties to Sojourner's critics. Her response was to pull open the front of her dress to show her bare breasts in order to validate her femaleness.

The racism of the abolitionists, the sexism of the men, black and white, and the racism of the white women's rights fighters were never enough to stop her. She knew that she had to stay focused upon the task

before her and that she must not be stopped by hardship, cruelty, or fear.

OF ALL THAT ONE CAN SAY about Sojourner Truth, the most profound fact about her life and story is her faith. It was a faith not rooted in some abstract, theological perception of God nor in some image of a puppet being manipulated by individual holiness and justification.

No, this God of hers is one who watches 9-year-old girls being sold into slavery from their parents for reasons that are clear only to God. Her God also meets her as a person in her personal, daily struggle as a slave and keeps her in a relationship that makes sense to her and offers her the courage to be.

Sojourner Truth holds up the beauty of mystery to those of us who are her biological and spiritual descendants. For there is no mystery greater than the reasons why Sojourner Truth should have hope and faith in the midst of the realities that confronted her throughout life. It is in her embrace of the mystery of faith and hope that she confronts the forces that would negate validity of her faith, her life, and her very personhood, in order to transform the negative and to give birth to the brightness of her spirit. Hers is a brightness that continues to shine into this last decade of the 20th century, as blacks, whites, men, and women try to shape a life of sanity out of a history of insanity and unrelatedness.

Sojourner Truth's brightness of spirit stands at the base of every pile of "ashes" to beckon us forward. That brightness shines in the ashes of our despair over civil rights gains, confused feminist struggle, the threat of nuclear holocaust, the deterioration of black families, poverty, and all of the many other ills of this era. The six-foot-tall ex-slave and itinerant woman preacher, declaring that she will not allow her life's light to be determined by the darkness around her, encourages our journeys and calls us—if we find it necessary—to "speak upon the ashes." ■

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'AIN'T I A WOMAN?'

SOJOURNER TRUTH: GENTLE BREEZE AND ROARING RIVER

by Arthur Huff Fauset

In 1852, while lecturing against slavery in various parts of the East and Middle West, [Sojourner Truth] decided to move on to Akron, Ohio, where a woman's rights convention was in session. Woman's rights was an issue only a bit less unpopular than slavery itself. Any convention of its advocates was sure to attract friends and foes alike, and the meetings very probably would develop into oratorical free-for-alls.

Among the strongest opponents of the idea were members of the clergy. They were in attendance in large numbers at the Akron convention. But they and their opposition had been expected; the meetings had been prepared with such a contingency in mind. What had not been anticipated was a tall, gaunt black woman in a gray dress and white collar, surmounted by an uncouth sunbonnet, who walked deliberately into the church where the meetings were being held, and with great poise and dignity, marched up the aisle to take a seat upon the pulpit steps.

Inevitably the rumor circled round the hall, "Sojourner!" Surprise among the leaders speedily yielded to chagrin, and then to open disapproval. Here was a mighty perilous bit of presumptuousness and intrusion. Woman's rights nothing, their enemies would say—this was merely a disguised abolition affair. The buzz of disapproval was very pronounced.

Affairs became so confused that the chairman had to rap vigorously for quiet and order. The morning session progressed like a procession across egg shells. All the while, Sojourner remained seated, quietly crouched down against the wall in a corner of the pulpit stairs, with her sunbonnet shading her eyes, her elbows on her knees, and her chin resting upon her broad hard palm....

But ever since her unannounced entrance into the auditorium, the convention was surcharged with the fear that at some moment Sojourner would arise to speak and thereby jeopardize the purpose for which the convention had been assembled. A constant patter of feet toward the chairman of the meeting was the result of Sojourner's presence; for the chairman must be reminded over and over that under no circumstances should she permit the Negro woman to utter a word.

DAT MAN OBER DAR SAY DAT WOMEN NEEDS TO BE HELPED INTO CARRIAGES, AND LIFTED OBER DITCHES, AND TO HAVE DE BEST PLACE EVERYWHERE. NOBODY EBER HELPED ME INTO CARRIAGES, OR OBER MUD PUDDLES, OR GIVE ME ANY BEST PLACE! AND AIN'T I A WOMAN?

"Whatever you do," they whispered to the chairman, "don't let this woman speak. It will ruin us. Every newspaper in the land will have our cause mixed with abolition and niggers. We shall be utterly denounced."

The second day of the convention arrived. Sojourner had remained so still that the fears of the group were lulled temporarily, and the two dissenting factions lashed out in open battle against each other. Various ministers

called on all their powers of persuasion to pour contempt on the movement which in a later day would result in the Nineteenth Amendment.

"Why should not men have superior rights and privileges?" disdainfully asked one of these men. "Just look at their superior intellects."

Still another pointed to Jesus Christ.

"If God had desired the equality of woman," he opined, "he would have given some token of his will through the birth, life, and death of the Saviour."

"Look at what happened on account of Eve," pointed out a third preacher.

WOMAN'S RIGHTS WAS COMING in for a very hard time. The timid women folk were no match for the more experienced men. They by their arguments had drawn much applause as well as sneers and raillery against woman's rights from rough men and boys in the galleries. A complete rout was in prospect.

All this time Sojourner Truth had scarcely lifted her head. But this was mere pose. Never had her mind been more greatly agitated, her rage more vehemently stirred. If ever she prayed to her God it was during these hours; for the trick of the ministers of calling upon the name of the Deity to condone an injustice harked back too vividly to the tactics which the same clergy was employing in a cowardly defense of slavery.

For hours she had held her peace. Experience had bred a certain civility, and she would not ruthlessly trample in pastures where she had not been welcomed. But now she had heard more than she could stand. She was God's flaming messenger of Truth, and God simply would not endure a continuation of this maligning in His name!...Slowly she emerged from her half-hidden perch. A half dozen voices at once gasped into the chairman's ear, "Don't let her speak!"...

As Sojourner made her way to the platform, a hissing sound of disapproval rushed through the room....Unmindful and unafraid, the old black woman moved on, with slowness and solemnity, to the front. Then she laid her old bonnet at her feet and, fastening her great, speaking eyes upon the chairman, she sought permission to address the group.

The chairman turns to the audience and announces with befitting simplicity, "Sojourner Truth has a word. I beg of you to listen for a few moments." With electrical rapidity the air cleared. The hubbub gave way to absolute silence....

Every eye fixes on the tall angular form. Her chin high, her eyes gleaming, yet seeming more a part of some faraway body than of that quiet poised person in whose head they shine, she stands for an instant and appraises her audience....

"Well, chillun," she began with that familiarity which came to her so readily, whether she was addressing God or man, "whar dar is so much racket, dar must be something out o' kilter. I t'ink dat 'twixt de niggers of de Souf an' de women at de Norf' all a-talkin' 'bout rights, de white men will be in a fix pretty soon.

"But what's all dis here talkin' about?"

She wheeled round in the direction of one of the previous speakers....

"Dat man ober dar say dat women needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted ober ditches, and to have de best place everywhere. Nobody eber helped *me* into carriages, or ober mud puddles, or give *me* any best place!"

She raised herself to her full height and in a voice as rumbling as thunder roared, "And ain't *I* a woman?"

A low murmur advanced through the crowd.

"Look at me," she continued. "Look at my arm."

She bared her right arm to the shoulder and dramatically demonstrated its great muscular power.

"I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns"—her voice was singing into the ether—"and no man could head me—and ain't *I* a woman?"

The murmur became more vocal.

"I have born'd five childrun and seen 'em mos' all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with mother's grief, none but Jesus heard—and ain't *I* a woman?"...

"Den dey talks 'bout dis t'ing in de head—what dis dey call it?"

"Intellect," whispers someone near by.

"Dat's it, honey—intellect. Now, what's dat got to do wit women's rights or niggers' rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint, and yourn holds a quart, wouldn't ye be mean not to let me have my little half-measure full?"

Now the crowd...rocks the church with applause and cheers, and echoes its approval of her words by pointing scornful fingers at the minister whom a few minutes ago it had applauded for sentiments in exactly the opposite key.

"Den dat little man in black dar," she continued, referring to another minister, "he say women can't have as much rights as man, 'cause Christ warn't a woman. Whar did your Christ come from?" she thundered at him, her arms outstretched, her eyes shooting fire. This was a lightning thrust. The throng sat perfectly quiet.

Then, raising her voice as high as it was possible for her to do, she repeated the query.

"Whar did your Christ come from?"

She hesitated a moment, poised over the audience like a bird hovering just before a final swoop down upon its prey, then thundered, "From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with him!"

The audience was overwhelmed. It could not endure so much logic and oratory at one time. Pandemonium broke loose.

But Sojourner was not quite through. She turned finally to the man who had made a deprecating gesture at Eve, and rebuked him.

"If de fust woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down, all alone—dese togedder ought to be able to turn it back and get it rightside up again; and now dey is asking to do it, de men better let 'em."

Amidst deafening cheering and stamping, Sojourner Truth, who had arisen to catcalls and hisses, could hardly make herself heard as she shouted in conclusion, "Bleeged to ye for hearin' on me; and now ole Sojourner hain't got nothing more to say." ■

Excerpted from Sojourner Truth: God's Faithful Pilgrim, *by Arthur Huff Fauset, published by University of North Carolina Press, 1938, and reissued by Russell & Russell, 1971.*

GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN

FANNIE LOU HAMER: A PROPHET FROM THE DELTA

by Edwin King

In a time of darkness on the Delta, of darkness covering the Earth and gross darkness the people, the light yet shone. From the black bottom lands and the dark swamps to the hills and distant mountain tops, a voice was heard from a daughter of Zion living in the midst of suffering but able to rejoice greatly, a daughter of Jerusalem who could shout with faith, for she believed, "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee."

Fannie Lou Hamer is remembered most for her proclamation of the Word, especially through songs like "This Little Light," an old song of faith with new words but the same underlying biblical message. Its scripture references were familiar to her original audiences of poor black people in the churches, fields, highways, and prisons of Mississippi:

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine...
Let it shine, let shine, let it shine!
Jesus gave it to me now, I'm gonna let it shine...
I've got the light of freedom, I'm gonna let it shine...
All over the Delta, I'm gonna let it shine....
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine!

Hamer accepted the power of the gospel within and the joyful work of shouting and sharing and spreading the light.

This woman, Mississippi's most respected and loved freedom fighter, left the cotton fields in 1962 to take her message of faith and freedom to the world. For 15 years she preached in travels all across the United States and in one trip to West Africa. Her life was also full of physical illness and, after a long bout with cancer, she died in 1977. Her grave is in a Sunflower County cotton field, on black cooperatively owned farming land, just outside her town of Ruleville.

The leading woman in the black civil rights battle, Hamer had concerns that were broader than racism. She was one of the first critics of American action in Vietnam, a major inspiration and fighter for women's rights, and a leader in anti-poverty and economic self-help efforts.

Hamer was a radical in the deepest sense of the word, seeking to understand, expose, and destroy the root causes of oppression. She questioned many things about the misuse of power in this land—things many of us are still afraid to understand. But hatred of her enemies, hatred of whites or any person, she resisted: "I feel sorry for anybody that could let hate wrap them up. Ain't no such thing as I can hate anybody and hope to see God's face."

HAMER ACCEPTED THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL WITHIN AND THE JOYFUL WORK OF SHOUTING AND SHARING AND SPREADING THE LIGHT.

THE BOARDWALK of Atlantic City, outside the site of the 1964 Democratic convention, was the first major mountaintop from which Hamer proclaimed the word, "Let my people go!" When Hamer spoke, America paused to listen. She burst into national prominence as the chief voice of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party's (MFDP) challenge to unseat and replace the fraudulently elected, all-white, regular delegation from that state.

The appeals and hard work of Hamer and the delegates had won a guarantee that future Democratic conventions would be open to minorities, and the greater issue soon became who would name the minority spokespersons. To stop Hamer and the Freedom Democrats, an angered, surprised, and frightened President Lyndon Johnson said that she must never be allowed to speak again at a Democratic convention.

He called out the trustworthy troops, the "brightest and best," the old reliables and the ambitious newcomers, including Hubert Humphrey, Walter Mondale, J. Edgar Hoover, and United Auto Workers (UAW) President Walter Reuther. Humphrey, the chief negotiator, had to prove his worthiness to become vice president by demonstrating his obedience and helping break liberal convention support for the MFDP.

A PROPHET WHO BELIEVED

BY L.C. DORSEY • **The main thing that struck people about Fannie Lou Hamer was the sense that she was a very strong Christian person. If you went to her home you might find her at the piano with Pap and the girls singing hymns. Her talks at community meetings were always peppered with biblical parables to emphasize her points. And of course her singing, which gave momentum to the whole civil rights movement, was 90 percent old spirituals. Some of them were revised to take on movement identities, but basically they were just the old traditional spirituals.**

Mrs. Hamer believed the gospel, and I think that was the source of the effectiveness of her movement work. She went forth not thinking that she was going to do anything, but that there was a greater spirit that would use her. She would simply be "an instrument of thy peace" as she got done what had to be done.

She really was the prophet feeding the people the truth. And she really was the fearless person going forth not on her own power but with the power of God. I don't think she saw her role in the movement as that of a historically great leader, but simply as an extension of her religion, from Luke, of tending to the sick and bringing liberty to the captives.

She practiced daily a selfless concern about other people. If you talk to Pap he thinks that's one of the things that contributed to her death, the fact that she never took care of herself physically, that she never got the proper rest and sometimes didn't even take time to eat properly. But there was never any complaint about herself or about her needs. The people's problems were there to be dealt with, and she was committed to helping them.

The thing that I admired most about the woman was that she was completely down to earth. You could go to her house after she had been to Africa or Europe or someplace and she'd be sitting in her yard not acting like, "I am an important person." Instead she'd say, "Come on in, ain't you hungry?" and get up to fix you something to eat. And she loved to go fishing. In fact one of the very last times I saw her she'd just spent a day with her husband fishing.

Mrs. Hamer was truly a one-of-a-kind person. I have never met or read about anyone else who so lived the doctrine of her Christianity. ■

L.C. DORSEY worked with Fannie Lou Hamer on the development of Freedom Farm Cooperative and other projects.

HAMER WAS A RADICAL IN THE DEEPEST SENSE OF THE WORD, SEEKING TO UNDERSTAND, EXPOSE, AND DESTROY THE ROOT CAUSES OF OPPRESSION.

Mondale, Humphrey's protégé, gained his first national distinction at this convention by defeating Hamer and the MFDP. Mondale was appointed chairperson of the special subcommittee that planned the infamous "two-seat" compromise and deceitfully told the convention that the MFDP had accepted it.

This scheme refused to replace the white Mississippians with MFDP delegates, allowing the entire MFDP to have just two "at-large" delegates, who were to be selected by the biggest white man of all, the president, in order to guarantee that the black delegates would not choose their own leaders and specifically to prevent the delegates from choosing Hamer. Hamer's response to the scheme was, "We didn't come all this way for no two seats!"

Mondale's committee did its work in secret, refusing to meet with Hamer and the MFDP. Even more secret was the assistance of Hoover, without whose help Mondale, Humphrey, and Johnson could never have carried the day. Hoover was very proud of the FBI's White House-ordered surveillance and disruption tactics used against the MFDP.

Reuther was brought in as a last-minute reinforcement for the defeat of the MFDP. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and Martin Luther King Jr. needed UAW money. Reuther used their need to break their support of the MFDP and went on to pressure the liberal convention delegations.

Humphrey tried to convince Hamer of his liberalism and of the trustworthiness of the system. He explained that while he had helped work for civil rights as a senator, as vice president he could do much more good work to promote civil rights, employment, and poverty programs, as well as working to end the expanding war in Vietnam. Hamer answered him directly:

Senator Humphrey, I know lots of people in Mississippi who have lost their jobs for trying to register to vote. I had to leave the plantation where I worked in Sunflower County. Now if you lost this job of vice president because you do what is right, because you help the MFDP, everything will be all right. God will take care of you. But if you take it [the vice-presidential nomination] this way, why, you will never be able to do any good for civil rights, for poor people, for peace or any of those things you talk about.

The politician talked of reasonableness in politics, of doing what was possible at the moment. Hamer talked of the danger of too much compromise, of not having enough goodness and strength left to do the good things even when the power did come. She ended this session of high-level, "smoke-filled back room" negotiations by quietly saying: "Senator Humphrey, I'm gonna pray to Jesus for you."

Some people call this speaking truth to power. Power's traditional answer to such honesty is to avoid or silence the truth. So Hamer was excluded from the final negotiation session. MFDP representatives Aaron Henry, Bob Moses, and I were tricked into attending a meeting

that excluded Hamer but did include Humphrey, Reuther, Bayard Rustin, King, and Andrew Young.

The most painful desertion at the Atlantic City convention was that of King. He had come to the convention promising full support of the MFDP. The voice of Young of SCLC was a key factor in causing King to turn momentarily away from the movement. When King leaned toward supporting the MFDP rejection of the "two-seat" plan, or finding some modification that would at least allow the MFDP people to vote and name their own leaders, Young pleaded with King, pulling him one way, while I pleaded and tried to pull him the other.

Young succeeded in persuading King not to alienate the powers that be, the big unions and their money, the liberals and their money, the party, the president. But King agonized over his choice and later privately said Hamer had been right when the MFDP rejected the compromise. The MFDP was prevented from communicating to the convention openly, and was defeated. Afterward, Hamer cried out: "I question America!"

Amid the tawdry decadence of the faded resort, Hamer and her allies discovered the emptiness of traditional American liberalism. Hamer quickly came to understand that the opposition to freedom of some in this country was a political expediency. The MFDP had to be destroyed, not just as a black people's movement, but as a symbol of rising grassroots democracy. The enemy was no longer the familiar Senator Eastland and the racists from Mississippi but the powers in high places (or those who wanted to be there).

In 1966 she wrote:

I used to say when I was working so hard in the [cotton] fields, if I could go to Washington—to the Justice Department—to the FBI—get close enough to let them know what was going on in Mississippi, I was sure that things would change in a week. Now that I have traveled across America, been to the Congress, to the Justice Department, to the FBI, I am faced with things I'm not too sure I wanted to find out. The sickness in Mississippi is not a Mississippi sickness. This is America's sickness.

But she was proud of her African and her American heritage, and accepted struggles and strengths as a legitimate inheritance. She once said: "There are some things I feel strong about...one is not to forget where I come from, and the other is to praise the bridges that carried me over."

Two years later, after King had begun speaking out against the war in Vietnam and on behalf of oppressed people all over the world, he was killed. Hamer spoke of this at the MFDP rally in Mt. Beulah, Mississippi (headquarters of the Delta Ministry), that had been organized to start the mule trains to Washington in the Poor People's Campaign:

They tried to brand me as a communist, and I know as much about communism as a horse do about Christmas....They assassinated Dr. King, then passed a law telling us how good they is; in 1972 we can buy a home on their side of town—now how in hell can we do that when we can't pay the rent where we are now? But that law did have something in it for me; if I get three people together and tell them the truth, they'll put me in jail for conspiracy and inciting to riot.

Now there's Martin Luther King. They didn't get him as long as he was middle class, but when he said he would organize the poor folks, white and Indians as well as black, they said, "We gotta kill this nigger." And it ain't Memphis. It's the same kind of conspiracy killed King that killed Kennedy and killed Malcolm X. Now they got the concentration camps ready and all I can say is, we better be ready, we better be ready!

HAMER TRIED to be always ready. Part of being ready is trying to understand the powers we resist and to recognize the power we have from each other and from our faith. She saw oppression of black people in Mississippi as the responsibility of all America, but she also saw the interrelationship of racial oppression to the world movements for justice, liberation, development, and self-determination. In 1967 she said:

What I really feel is necessary is that the black people in this country will have to upset this applecart. We can no longer ignore the fact that America is not the "land of the free and the home of the brave"....There is so much hypocrisy in America. The land of the free and the home of the brave is all on paper. It doesn't mean anything to us. The only way we can make this thing a reality in America is to do all we can to destroy this system and bring this thing out to the light that has been under the cover all these years. The Scriptures have said, "the things that have been done in the dark will be known on the housetops."

The woman from the Delta who said, "I am sick and tired of being sick and tired," was a woman of action as well as words. For several years in Mississippi she was employed as a field secretary of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Then after the Democratic convention in 1964 she ran in a counter-election for the U.S. Congress in the unsuccessful MFDP "Congressional Challenge" attempt to unseat the illegally elected white congressmen from Mississippi.

For a year the MFDP sent more than 1,000 people to Washington to lobby for this effort. The people's efforts were supported by lawyers such as Arthur Kinoy, Bill Kuntsler, Ben Smith, and Morton Stavis. Church support was coordinated by Robert Spike of the National Council of Churches. Finally, Hamer was joined by Annie Devine and Victoria Gray, and they became the first black women in America to be seated on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives as, for a brief few minutes, the regular white Mississippi congressmen had to step aside while Congress considered their challenged credentials.

Almost immediately, however, Congress voted to reseat the white men. Thousands of freedom lovers were proud of those women and thousands shared the shame and discouragement expressed by Hamer: "The challenge was dismissed, and I saw another part of democracy go down the drain."

Such failures did not stop her from working the rest of her life in local and national elections, sometimes supporting new black candidates, sometimes progressive whites, sometimes "lesser evils," sometimes those in the regular party, sometimes independents. She warned of

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automatically equating black voting rights with real power, and often described the new political issue of the late '60s and '70s as not whether blacks would vote, but who would control that vote, the black people or the powers that be.

She questioned much about poverty programs and government aid as ways to control and manipulate poor people, especially black people. She knew that winning freedom was a constant struggle for any oppressed people. She worried about too much dependency being created by handouts, and wanted people to stand up for themselves:

The question for black people is not when is the white man going to give us our rights, or when is he going to give us good education for our children, or when is he going to give us jobs. If the white man gives you anything, just remember when he gets ready he will take it right back. We have to take it for ourselves.

AMID THE TAWDRY DECADENCE OF THE FADED RESORT, HAMER AND HER ALLIES DISCOVERED THE EMPTINESS OF TRADITIONAL AMERICAN LIBERALISM.

Hamer made up her own mind. In the early debates over black power and separation she affirmed her belief in both black power and integration. As usual she saw the argument in a revealing way: "I don't believe in separatism—a house divided against itself cannot stand, and neither can a nation. This country produces separatists. America is sick, and [humanity] is on the critical list."

Many resources sustained her: humor, modesty, courage, common sense, a heritage of biblical teaching applied to this world, an abiding sense of joy, deep spiritual wells of prayer, and, above all, her faith:

Christianity is being concerned about [others], not building a million-dollar church while people are starving right around the corner. Christ was a revolutionary person, out there where it was happening. That's what God is all about, and that's where I get my strength.

And her optimism was an inspiration she gave to many people: "Out of the baddest of people there's some good quality there, and out of the best there's some bad. We have to look for the best."

Ilene Strelitz Melish, a university student who went South with other volunteers in the 1964 Freedom Summer campaign, spoke of Hamer's presence in their training sessions:

Fannie Lou Hamer seemed the emotional rock. Every general meeting started off...with Mrs. Hamer standing in the front of the room in a crisp cotton dress, feet firmly apart and head tilted upward, leading Freedom songs, her voice carrying easily above the several hundred others....I don't really know where Mrs. Hamer is standing, but she is standing there solidly, feet planted firmly apart....She can sing with us over the distance, and from her vantage point she can see us all.

Hamer, theologian and preacher, is revealed in a musical work she helped create. The song took the message of the Old Covenant, of the Exodus and Passover, and combined it with the incarnation message of the New Covenant, of Advent and Christmas and Epiphany and Easter.

She joined an old slave spiritual about deliverance from bondage after standing up to Pharaoh and proclaiming, "Let my people go," to the Christmas spiritual "Go Tell It On the Mountain." That Christmas spiritual-carol tells of waiting and seeking as well as proclaiming:

When I was a seeker, I sought both night and day.
I asked the Lord to help me, and he showed me the way.

He made me a watchman upon the city wall.
And if I am a Christian I am the least of all.

Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills, and everywhere.
Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ is born.

Hamer once read those verses and that powerful chorus line to a group of students and said: "We used to sing it that way. But now we changed this song. Now we sing:

Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills, and everywhere.
Go, tell it on the mountain, to let my people go!

Then she led the song, with her verses from the gospels, the epistles, and Revelation:

Paul and Silas was bound in jail, let my people go.
Had no money for to go their bail, let my people go.

Paul and Silas began to shout, let my people go.
Jail doors open and they walked out, let my people go.

Who's that yonder dressed in red? Let my people go.
Must be the children that Moses led, let my people go.

Who's that yonder dressed in black? Let my people go.
Must be the hypocrites turning back, let my people go.

Who's that yonder dressed in blue? Let my people go.
Must be the children now passing through, let my people go.

I had a little book he gave to me, let my people go.
And every page spelled victory, let my people go.

Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere.
Go, tell it on the mountain, to let my people go!

After the singing and the praying came the preaching and the message of what God would have the people do now for themselves. The following passage is the one Hamer used most often at freedom mass meetings:

And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it is written, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

–Luke 4:17-19

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A TRIBUTE TO THE JUDGE

THURGOOD MARSHALL'S LIVING LEGACY

by Roger Wilkins

In inviting you to read this small tribute to Justice Thurgood Marshall, I should, as he taught me when I was still a law student, disclose my interest in the matter. Simply stated, it is this: I have known the Judge for 50 years, and I love him.

Not only have I known Marshall since I was a child; he was the first person who ever paid me to do legal work. It was in the summer of 1955, when the *Brown vs. Board of Education* desegregation decision was still very new and I had finished my junior year in law school. When I arrived from Ann Arbor, Michigan, at the small suite of offices the NAACP Legal Defense Fund occupied in mid-Manhattan, Marshall put me right to work.

"I want you to write me a memo on the Due Process clause of the 14th Amendment," he said. "I've done a lot of work on Equal Protection, but I need to brush up on Due Process."

For Marshall to ask a law student to help him brush up on an aspect of the 14th Amendment was a little like Magic Johnson asking a high school player for pointers on how to get the ball in to the low post. I shrank at the prospect. But I attacked the project earnestly and finally produced a few pages strung together with what I hoped was passable legal reasoning.

The memo seemed to shriek INADEQUATE as I passed it tremulously across Marshall's desk. I hoped he would bury it in his briefcase. Instead, he took my memo into the little room that served as the library, where most of the lawyers were working. He stood leaning against a doorjamb while he read, and the people paused in their work to watch him. I tried to hide and I wanted to die. Finally Marshall finished.

"Hey y'all," he said in a loud, bearish voice, "this boy ain't as stupid as he looks."

And so I was initiated and welcomed into the civil rights struggle with guffaws and warmth as the big ol' bear strolled back into his lair, grinning broadly and chuckling.

Marshall was the great general of the civil rights legal armies, and warmth and humor were among his most effective tools. He got the most extraordinary efforts out of people because they were devoted to the cause, because they loved him, and because they had the deepest respect for him. He has a brilliant legal mind and the heart of a lion.

In the years before *Brown*, black people could be lynched in certain parts of the South just for being uppity. And nothing was more uppity than for a colored lawyer to go to meetings to stiffen the resolve of black people to challenge the tyranny they faced, and then to go into court and help them do it. There are certain places in the rural South I don't like to travel today. Marshall traveled those circuits before federal marshals in the South stopped saying nigger in public and before there were television cameras and Northern reporters to spread a patina of protection over civil rights people. It was not that Marshall was impervious to fear. It was simply that he was determined to do the work he had undertaken to do.

MARSHALL'S WORK also required him to be a strategist and a politician. Was integration of schools the appropriate route to take? How should he go for it, incrementally or in big gulps? How much of the NAACP and the rest of the Negro community could he keep marching behind which strategy?

He made his choices, and then he selected his army. Thurgood Marshall is one of the great brain pickers of all time. He would assemble the best legal minds available to his cause and orchestrate their work. He was a genius at eliciting the best ideas and then putting them to the best use. He was able to keep his legion of brilliant lawyers—staff and volunteer—both overworked and devoted. And when he got to the courtroom he was, in the words of Justice John Paul Stevens, "one of the country's greatest advocates."

The Judge brought the same homely sense of what life is like for little people and the same passion for justice that had characterized his earlier efforts to his work on the Supreme Court. His opinions, whether for the majority or in dissent, are alive with his roaring human force and with the rich, elegant humanity that makes the principles of our Constitution come alive. They are opinions that will be read for decades to come—long after the parched phrases written by the dry spirits now in the majority are dust-covered and forgotten.

And there are other ways that he doesn't change. I went up to his chambers in the Court for a visit during his last term. When I walked in, he looked up from some papers and greeted me, if greeting is what you would call it.

"Sit down, boy," he said, "and tell me what's on your alleged mind."

And then at the end of the term he resigned and went out and told the world it was "because I'm old and falling apart."

So, how are we to measure this man who was a person for the ages *before* he got to the Supreme Court? He once gave an interviewer the standard he thought was appropriate.

"I hope when I'm gone they'll say: 'He did the best he could with what he had.'"

That and more, Judge. That and much more. ■

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DEGREES OF CHANGE

MYLES HORTON'S LIFETIME COMMITMENT TO RADICAL EDUCATION

by Sue Thrasher

I first read about him in 1961. My hometown newspaper, a small, eight-page weekly, was suddenly filled with stories about the local man accused of running a communist training school. The story ran for several weeks and was definitely the biggest story of the year.

I didn't know anything at the time about the civil rights movement, but having grown up in Cold War America, I thought that communism had to do with the threat of "foreign" domination. These articles were confusing, however. The only criteria for being called a communist appeared to be advocating interracial gatherings. This man Myles Horton admitted to that.

It was another three years before I actually met him, critical years between 1961 and 1964 that drastically changed us and the region. I left our hometown and went to school in Nashville, where there was an active civil rights movement. I began to put together values I had learned in a country Methodist church with the everyday contradictions swirling around me, and gradually became an active participant in the movement.

Like many other white Southerners, I developed a love/hate relationship with the region and fought a losing battle to deny my cultural roots. The Easter bombing of four young girls in a Birmingham church in 1963 made me understand once and for all that if I didn't speak and act on behalf of my own values, others would speak for me.

I decided to stay and fight. It was inevitable that my involvement in the movement would lead me to the Highlander Center and to the man whose "communist training school" had been closed by the state of Tennessee.

FOR MOST OF HIS LIFE, MYLES WAS OUTSIDE THE MAINSTREAM, A RADICAL EDUCATOR WHOSE COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE EXACTED A HIGH PRICE.

MYLES HORTON'S IDEA OF A SCHOOL for mountain people had taken shape in the Depression South of the late 1920s. As a vacation Bible school teacher in the small Cumberland Mountain community of Ozone, Tennessee, Horton discovered that as a teacher he didn't need to have all the answers; people could find their own answers by pooling their knowledge.

After graduating from Cumberland University, he spent the next four years looking for a model for the kind of school he wanted to create. His quest took him to Union Theological Seminary, the University of Chicago, and finally to Denmark for a closer look at the Danish Folk High Schools. Finally on a Christmas eve in Copenhagen, he admitted that he would never have all the answers until he had a place, a situation, and people. On one of his notecards, he wrote, "Purpose and situation depend on factors you can't know anything about...forget all the methods...find the place...the people...the situation. Use your ideas as a lodestone and move into the thing and start."

In the fall of 1932, Myles and his new partner, Don West, moved into the small community of Summerfield and opened the doors of their folk school. In short order, they were offering classes to the local community and beginning to journey to the small town of Wilder, Tennessee, where a coal miners strike was in progress. After gathering information about threats on the life of the strike leader, Myles was arrested; the charge: "getting information and going back and teaching it." He liked to recall years later that it was the only time the charges against him had been on target.

Throughout the 1930s and '40s, Highlander was predominantly a labor school, working closely with the member unions of the Congress of Industrial Organizations. Although the school operated with an interracial policy, it was clearly an island in the segregated environment of the South.

Union members found that their education came as much from their social and living arrangements while at Highlander as from their classes on how to put out a local newsletter or run a meeting using parliamentary procedure. It soon became clear to the staff that the movement for equality had to be the next item on the agenda, and in early 1953, one year before the Supreme Court decision on *Brown vs. Board of Education*, Highlander began planning a series of workshops to help community leaders prepare for desegregation.

Those workshops and the aftermath of the *Brown* decision were the beginning of an intense 20-year struggle in which the work of the school focused almost entirely on the freedom movement. It was during this period that Myles helped develop one of the most extraordinary literacy programs in the nation—the "citizenship schools"—that began on a small island off the coast of Charleston and spread throughout the South. Black people were taught by other black people how to read and write and vote.

Although Highlander had always been controversial, its increasing involvement in the civil rights struggle made it even more vulnerable, and in 1959 state troopers staged a raid on the school and arrested several staff members. It was the opening salvo in an all-out campaign by the state to close the school. An investigation by the state legislature and a sensationalized trial in Grundy County followed. In 1961, the school's charter was revoked, and all of its assets were seized and sold at public auction.

Highlander Center photo

When the doors to the Highlander Folk School were padlocked by the Grundy County sheriff in 1961, Myles responded that you can padlock a building but not an idea. "Highlander is an idea," he said. "You can't kill it, and you can't close it in. It will grow wherever people take it."

Operating under a new charter as the Highlander Research and Education Center, the idea was taken to the freedom movement of "Mississippi Summer," the Poor People's March on Washington, the anti-poverty and strip-mining movements in Appalachia, the occupational health and safety struggles of cotton mill workers and coal miners, and to workplaces and communities concerned about a safe, toxic-free environment.

THE SOUTHERN MOUNTAIN SCHOOL that Myles envisioned is now in its 58th year. Since his death in January 1990, several people have asked, "What will happen to Highlander now?" While it is true that Myles embodied the idea of Highlander more than any other single individual, it is also true that Highlander was never a one-person operation. From the beginning, he worked in concert with others.

Don West, Jim Dombrowski, Zilphia Johnson (who Myles fell in love with and married), Ralph Tefferteller, Zilla Hawes, and Mary Lawrence all helped build a Southern labor movement through their work with Highlander. Septima Clark and Bernice Robinson were instrumental in creating, nurturing, and expanding the citizenship schools.

In 1971, Myles retired officially from his capacity as executive director of Highlander, knowing that it was necessary for new leadership to emerge. He never lost his curiosity about the world and people working to change it, and his retirement from the day-to-day activities allowed him to travel to China, Southeast Asia, India, New Zealand, and throughout Latin America, meeting and talking with community educators and activists.

Myles always brought back what he had learned to the Highlander staff, and advocated persistently that any work around issues of social change and justice in this country had to be within an international context. In 1983, he helped organize an exchange between Latin American and North American adult educators, an encounter that led to further exchanges and the development of an international program committee at Highlander.

For most of his life, Myles was outside the mainstream, a radical educator whose commitment to social justice exacted a high price. He was physically beaten, verbally harassed, and never had much in the way of material goods. Finally, in the late 1970s, his work as an educator began to gain recognition, and late in life he was the recipient of several awards and honorary degrees. He was not impressed by any of this recognition, but used each occasion to advocate his philosophy of education and social change.

When Bill Moyers did a two-hour special profile on him, Moyers had a hard time finishing a question before Myles would begin to answer. Teased about this later, Myles simply responded: "He gets to be on television all the time; this was my only chance."

His experiential philosophy of education was most similar to that of popular educators from the Third World such as Paulo Freire, and he called it "education for social change." It was based on respect for people's knowledge and a firm belief that people could change. He used to say that you always have to look at people with two eyes: seeing them as the person they are now, and also seeing them as the person they could become.

While Myles was a master storyteller, he knew that "telling stories" and sharing experiences was only the beginning of learning. The next step was collective analysis of those experiences in order to change concrete situations. He maintained that an unexamined event was merely a happening.

He worked right up until the final weeks of his life, saving some of his last energy for a meeting with Paulo Freire so that the two of them could discuss their forthcoming "spoken" book. He battled cancer with the same ferocity that he had battled all of life's other injustices, and in doing so, continued to teach all of us around him about the value of life.

I had no idea in 1961 that the man with the so-called communist training school would become a major mentor and friend. The first thing he taught me was that I didn't have to be ashamed of being from the South; the second was that I had a responsibility to change it. I am one of a multitude of people whose lives he touched and changed. His "ideas" will go where all of us take them.

SUE THRASHER, of Savannah, Tennessee, was on the staff of the Highlander Center from 1978 to 1986. She is currently working on a doctorate at the Center for International Education at the University of Massachusetts.

STUDY SESSION 5 / QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What are the key points that James Cone mentions about the visions of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X? What is the basis of these differences in perspective?

2. Do you agree that to understand black America white people need a broader understanding of the African-American experience than just what is offered by the life and teachings of Martin Luther King Jr.? Why?

3. How have your views of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X changed by reading the articles by James Cone and Vincent Harding? Is your experience of life in the United States that of a dream or a nightmare? Why? What personal experiences have led you to this view?

4. In what ways did King's vision of America change in the last years of his life, according to Vincent Harding and James Cone? Is American society living up to the vision of Martin Luther King Jr. at the time of his assassination? Are you?

5. It was not the vision of either King or Malcolm X simply to create a society in which people of color could participate in the same structures that continue to keep people in poverty. Instead, they planned to change the society so that no one would suffer from prejudice, whether it was based on race, class, gender, or other differences. In what ways does the struggle to enact their vision continue today? What personal and societal transformation is still needed?

6. Based on your knowledge of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, what do you think their views of the United States would be if they were alive today?

7. When Sojourner Truth, Martin Luther King Jr., and Fannie Lou Hamer spoke, they often challenged the assumptions of people who would have considered themselves against racism. Sometimes it was the people who agreed with them to some extent that were their most difficult adversaries when it came to challenging the fundamental foundations of racism. Why was this so? What about their lives do you find most challenging? Where do you find yourself backing away from their message?

8. What qualities of Sojourner Truth and Fannie Lou Hamer made them leaders? How does the leadership of these two women challenge the commonly held assumptions about the educational and economic background, as well as other qualifications, of public leaders?

9. What connections do you see between prejudice based on race, class, and gender differences? What lessons can we learn from Sojourner Truth and Fannie Lou Hamer about ways to address these prejudices?

10. Fannie Lou Hamer and Sojourner Truth both were unwilling to compromise their beliefs when facing an unjust situation. How did this make them successful? Do you agree with their approach to social change, or do you think they should have acted differently? In what ways do their lives suggest methods of seeking social change?

11. Are there issues at your church related to imbalances of power among different racial groups? How are the differences overcome?

12. How can people of faith prepare for the change necessary for a social transformation on racial issues? What preparation do you need? What preparation does your church need? What preparation does your city need?

13. Consider other historical African-American, Latino, Asian-American, and American Indian leaders that should be studied by Americans. What were their contributions?

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WHAT'S WRONG *with* INTEGRATION?

▲ INTEGRATION HAS BEEN THE OFFICIAL social policy of race relations since the Supreme Court's landmark anti-segregation ruling in 1954. The breaking down of "whites-only" barriers—in education, housing, and some nominal aspects of the work world—was lauded as progress from the discriminatory forced separation of Jim Crow.

But now, almost four decades later, many are asking, Is racial integration working? Who have been the primary beneficiaries of integrative policies? These questions, and the resultant exploration of new models and definitions of racial identity and reconciliation, have been the topic of discussion within the African-American community for years. It is an essential topic for all who wish to develop structures and systems that will ensure the long-term survival of communities of color.

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FROM INTEGRATION TO TRANSFORMATION

BUILDING A TRULY ANTI-RACIST SOCIETY

by Jim Wallis

What's wrong with integration? Plenty, says a rising tide of voices, especially in the black community. Integration, the ruling national concept of race relations in the decades since the civil rights movement, has not produced what was promised. Instead of equality, integration has meant selective assimilation for middle-class blacks while the urban underclass and rural poor are simply left behind.

In the critical areas of income and employment, education, housing, and health, life for most black Americans is still separate and very unequal. Despite increased visibility in the media and popular culture,

Jim West/Impact Visuals

black America has yet really to enter the social and economic mainstream and, most significant, to genuinely share power in what is still a white society.

Not only is justice yet to be achieved through integration, but the black sense of self and community has been greatly diminished, say many critics. Indeed, what is most wrong with integration is simply this: It has always been and continues to be on white terms.

Rapidly changing demographics in the United States will only serve to further heighten the failures and contradictions of integration as growing populations of Hispanics, Asians, and other people of color combine with African Americans to transform America's racial "minorities" into the new national majority. The 1990 census revealed dramatic changes in the ratio of white citizens to Americans of color. Even *Time* magazine ran a cover story on "America's Changing Colors" and asked, "What will the U.S. be like when whites are no longer the majority?"—a reality it predicted by the year 2056.

This is a cultural and psychic shift of enormous proportions as a country established by and for white Europeans becomes a nation where most people will trace their descent from Africa, Latin America, or Asia. White America, which has yet to come to terms with its "minorities," is totally unprepared for its own minority status. Yet, that fundamental identity shift is now inevitable and, in many parts of the country, is already occurring. In light of this seismic disruption in American history, the present concept of integration will soon be even more outmoded.

WE NOW HAVE AN opportunity to take an honest look at the failures of integration for blacks and whites. We have a chance to dream of a more genuinely democratic vision of race relations for America's multicultural future.

Maybe the most important question to be asked is whether "integration" was really ever the goal of the black freedom movement of the 1950s and '60s. Perhaps the concept of integration, as it developed in the years following the civil rights movement, can be better understood as the white society's attempt to contain, control, and reduce the potential impact of the most important social movement in recent American history.

Certainly, the motivations and aspirations of social movements and their participants are many, varied, and even often contradictory. And surely many involved in the civil rights movement were simply interested in an

end to legal segregation and the opportunity for black people to individually assimilate into the mainstream of white American society. However, as many movement participants and commentators point out, at the heart of the black freedom struggle was a call for social transformation.

If the freedom movement was not simply aiming for integration into the dominant values and structures of the white society, but rather envisioning a fundamental transformation of that social order, the revisiting of these questions is indeed a dangerous discussion. The answers to the questions depend greatly on which streams and leaders of the movement we are referring to, both then and now.

It is clear that Martin Luther King Jr., especially in his later years, and Malcolm X were both calling for radical social transformation rather than assimilation. But with the assassinations of the movement's two greatest leaders, assimilation gradually took precedence over transformation. The result has been the selective and still partial integration of the black middle class, the social and economic abandonment of the black majority, the widespread white attitude that the "racial problem" has been solved, and a country whose basic structural realities remain unchanged.

MAYBE THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION TO BE ASKED IS WHETHER INTEGRATION WAS REALLY EVER THE GOAL OF THE BLACK FREEDOM MOVEMENT.

In other words integration has proceeded under mostly white terms and control. Integration has never been a two-way street and, indeed, was never meant to be. It has always been, in every way, white directed.

One example is my own high school, which was all white when I attended it more than two decades ago. It is now more than one-third black. In a recent conversation with a teacher there, I asked how much the curriculum had changed over the years. None at all. African-American history, culture, and perspectives were still absent, and when some students formed a black student union, the white perception was that integration wasn't working.

In another *Time* cover story on the black middle class, the magazine reported that "the passions and sufferings of the civil rights struggle have culminated, as they were meant to, in the mundane pleasures and pangs of middle-class life." That is indeed what *Time* magazine wants and needs to be true. But the problem isn't just that *Time* missed the spiritual center of the freedom movement. Rather, like all the governing institutions of American life, *Time* has a powerful vested interest in defining the movement's goal as assimilation instead of transformation. The threatening possibilities of the black freedom struggle can thus be checked, domesticated, and even co-opted while making Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday a national holiday sponsored by Coca-Cola.

It must also be said that integration has allowed white liberals to feel good about "racial progress" and

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WHITE AMERICA'S DEBT CRISIS

THE DECONSTRUCTION OF BLACK INSTITUTIONS

by Bob Hulteen

■ THE DEBT CRISIS ON THE MINDS of most Americans these days is the trade imbalance between the United States and Japan. The U.S. debt crisis is born from an almost immediate turnover of American dollars to Japanese corporations when Americans buy Toyota cars, Sony tape decks, or Nikon cameras. Many American dollars only get one turnaround in U.S. commercial markets.

But white America has done just the same thing to black America. According to Tony Brown, syndicated columnist and TV talk-show host, while most ethnic groups historically turned money over within their communities five to 12 times, post-integration America sees blacks turning money intracommunity less than one time. And just as Americans see their fears rise as the debt does, white Americans need to understand that African Americans are watching that same financial drain on their communities. Integration has made the economic indebtedness and dependency even greater.

More than 25 years have passed since the last great legislative civil rights victory—the Voting Rights Amendment, which was debated in Congress in June 1965 and signed into law on August 6, 1965. With the passage of time, we have the opportunity to look back at what integration has meant.

POPULAR CULTURE—WHETHER YOU like it or not—is a window to the soul of our society. By submerging ourselves in the symbols that define realities for our culture, we are sometimes able to re-examine and re-evaluate what we have thought essential.

Twenty-five years ago white Americans were not likely to see any African Americans in most of the places where they shopped, ate, or worked. Blacks would not have been prominent characters in popular TV sitcoms; would not have been selected as Miss America; would not have been elected state governor or taken seriously as a presidential candidate. But now for a small number of African Americans, there is room at—or at least near—the table of opportunity. But there is not room for the whole community.

And since there is only room for a few, it is mostly superstars who get there. Michael Jackson, Oprah Winfrey, Bill Cosby, and Julius Erving can "make it," but lots of others cannot. And while integration was necessary to make room for even a few black people, it also brought an inevitable reality.

Black-owned businesses, which had supported the rise to fame of the superstars, could not compete, by and large, with the better financed, white-owned enterprises that invited the stars in. Many of those businesses went under, taking with them much of the

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what they have done to "help" blacks. By not challenging the structure of white power and privilege, integration has, in different ways, served the self-interests of both white conservatives and liberals.

Vincent Harding, an active participant in the civil rights movement and now one of its best historians, believes the freedom movement is not yet over. "We didn't see the depth of what we had to do," he says. "To root out things that are centuries deep takes tremendous imagination and experimentation. We have been thinking much too superficially about what integration means. If we look seriously at our country today, we will discover that the changes we need cannot come about without great energy and sacrifice.

"We thought we had done our sacrificing in the '60s and wonder why it hasn't worked. But we were trying to redeem the soul of America and you don't do that in a decade. We must not settle for elitist solutions but open our eyes to the hurt and pain of the masses of the people."

INTEGRATION BEGS the question—integration into what? What kind of a society prefers selective assimilation to transformation? The answer is one which still seeks to cover over the fundamental questions of justice and compassion. Integration has served that cover-up.

The reign of insatiable materialism over human dignity in American society destroys the souls of rich and poor alike. And the acceptance of an economic system based on theft from the poor at home and around the world will continue to keep masses of people at the bottom. In a white-controlled society, a disproportionate number of those will be people of color.

When Sojourners Community moved to the inner city of Washington, D.C., in 1975, we quickly discovered that the black residents of our Southern Columbia Heights neighborhood were not particularly interested in forming an integrated church. What they were interested in was working together on the issues of housing, food, and education. Out of a common agenda came the sharing of faith and struggle in Bible study and prayer groups, retreats, and celebrations of thanksgiving for the work we've been given to do together. Slowly, we are learning that equality will come from partnership in a shared struggle more than integration for its own sake.

The movement we must make is from integration to transformation. Integration of white and black elites in an unjust society leaves too many people out and the fundamental questions of justice unanswered. The spiritual heritage of the freedom movement is one of personal and social transformation, and that spirit must be reclaimed now.

White society has preferred integration to equality. The integration of paternalism and dependence must come to an end. In its place will be a multicultural partnership of equals—a partnership for the democratic transformation of the United States. ■

JIM WALLIS is editor of Sojourners *and a pastor of Sojourners Community in Washington, D.C.*

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income—and a measure of self-reliance—that had provided the safety net for other African Americans.

Before, black Americans had purchased most of their goods and services from other black Americans. Their paychecks were recycled through the African-American community several times over. When the institutions were lost, so were the paychecks—often after just one pass through.

Before Jackie Robinson crossed the color divide in baseball, there existed a black-owned, black-managed, black-fielded baseball league. And it was tremendously successful. The Chicago American Giants of the Negro National League not only were tremendously successful, they were very popular. The American Giants sometimes had more people attending games than either of the white-owned teams in Chicago. Black-owned businesses supported the teams with advertising as well as concession services and jobs.

Once the "Major Leagues" started accepting the best African-American players, the level of support for the black-owned teams waned, and they folded. African-American players made less money (for a while). And the black community was hurt.

A similar thing happened in the music industry. As Nelson George documents in *The Death of Rhythm and Blues*, when black musicians were allowed into white-owned clubs, the minority music houses were not able to hold the clientele who followed their favorite stars into other arenas. As popular black musicians crossed over into the wealthier white market, stable institutions went under and some wallets got thinner. Others, of course, grew.

The corresponding problem is that, while there is room for the cream of the African-American crop at the top, there is less room for average talent and entry-level performers. Proven acts have the chance to prove themselves over and over again, but new voices can't get heard in a white-dominated publicity network.

Capitalists are always looking for new markets. And the one color that can blind all others is green—profit. Once those with money could see the potential, they were willing to overlook their prejudice in order to cut a deal.

What does this mean for developing black institutions now? In the 1920s a strong and secure black film industry was destroyed when former leading men and women took bit parts—as maids, butlers, and gardeners—in dominant-culture films. But with the success of Spike Lee, the Hudlin brothers, John Singleton, and Robert Townsend, a new age of black filmmaking is burgeoning. Similarly, since rap music has such low production costs some musicians have been able to initiate new recording companies. These filled the void left when other black-owned music enterprises folded as white-owned companies took the talent.

Will this current renaissance in African-American art pull the community intact into the mainstream of the culture market? That may be the most important question for the black community in the future. It's the way out of a debt crisis that African Americans didn't create. ■

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WHOSE AMERICA IS IT?

A NEW GENERATION RECONSIDERS INTEGRATION

by Anthony A. Parker

See to it that no one falls away from God; that no bitter root springs up through which many may become defiled; that there be among you no fornicator or godless person like Esau, who sold his birthright for a meal. You know that afterward he wanted to inherit his father's blessings, but was rejected because he had no opportunity to alter his choice, even though he sought the blessing with tears.
—Hebrews 12:15-17

TODAY'S YOUNG generation of black Americans is in the midst of a spiritual crisis. I am referring specifically to those black women and men who, like me, were born in the mid-to-late 1960s and came of age during the '80s under the Reagan administration. The promise of integration, the freedom for blacks to assimilate into white society, was gained at the expense of our cultural birthright; that sense of community and morality that sustained our elders through thick and thin. Consequently, black America, at one time the moral conscience of the nation, now finds itself to be a reflection of this society's most base values.

The concept of integration is, ultimately, a spiritual issue for black America. Not a political issue. Not a social issue. Not an economic issue. This is not to say that there aren't political, social, and economic ramifications for blacks in our daily existence in white America. But blacks' involvement in these three areas can only be edifying to ourselves, and to this nation, when our spiritual and moral vision is clear.

INOCULATED WITH SECULAR VALUES EMPHASIZING THE INDIVIDUAL INSTEAD OF THE COMMUNITY, YOUNG BLACKS RARELY RECOGNIZE EACH OTHER AS BROTHERS AND SISTERS, OR AS COMRADES IN THE STRUGGLE.

And it used to be. Unlike the generation of blacks who reached maturity before, and during, the early '70s, my generation has no memory of credible black leaders, such as Malcolm X or Martin Luther King Jr. Nor do we have a relationship with those indigenous institutions, such as the black church, that developed as a consequence of racism and segregation. The debilitating effects of racism and segregation notwithstanding, blacks had been able to instill a sense of self and community. But the practice of integration created the illusion of equality with the wider culture, effectively wresting control of the black freedom movement by holding it hostage to federal good will and weakening or destroying those institutions that influenced blacks' worldview.

The effect this loss of control has had on my generation is devastating. Growing up in "integrated" America has established a pattern of cognitive dissonance among young blacks. Inoculated with secular values emphasizing the individual instead of the community, and progressive politics over theology, young blacks rarely recognize each other as brothers and sisters, or as comrades in the struggle. We're now competitors, relating to each other out of fear and mistrust.

The decay of culturally specific institutions in the black community has meant the supplantation of concrete programmatic policies designed to alleviate our worsening condition in America. Whereas black America once had a unique platform from which it could (and did) address issues, we are now reduced to angry rhetoric. Without ownership of black institutions, our best interests will never be served, our leaders will not be held accountable, and the only vested interest we will have is in our problems. And they are legion. Black-on-black violence, drug abuse, high school dropout rates, teen pregnancy, single-parent households, high rates of incarceration, crime, homelessness, and inadequate health care, just to name a few.

WHO ARE WE? Where are we going? And how are we going to get there? We can no longer answer these questions. Indeed, we have stopped asking them. But just as the future of blacks seemed to be in peril when integration was introduced 40 years ago, our future as a viable racial and ethnic group in this country will be greatly diminished unless a new model for racial and cultural development is established.

The total assimilation-immersion-integration of blacks into an atomized, secular society is not in our best interests precisely because it prohibits such development.

Blacks' collective energies need to shift toward recreating these cultural, political, social, and economic infrastructures within the black community, all of which should be secured on a coherent theological foundation. Without such infrastructures, we have no equal basis for contact, negotiation, or compromise with members of other groups.

The establishment of cultural, political, and social institutions led by blacks for the express purpose of racial and cultural development demands that blacks' political, social, and economic relationships with whites and other groups be redefined. The increasingly plural nature of the United States makes it imperative, I believe, that blacks choose the context in which, and the extent to which, contact occurs with groups whose values are different from our own.

Paul Willis

Then afterward I will pour out my spirit upon all humankind. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old people shall dream dreams, your young people shall see visions.

—Joel 3:1

WHILE THE NUMBER of black elected officials has increased during the last 20 years, blacks' influence on the implementation of public policy remains negligible. Once in office, blacks are quickly frustrated because voting strength devoid of an indigenous economic base is self-defeating. Combined with the need for a viable economic base is the need for independent black political bases outside of the electoral process.

The need for the development of quality black leadership outside of the electoral process is essential and cannot be overstated. It seems that a resurgence of leadership needs to come under the following four categories: spiritual and moral (pastors and religious advocates); intellectual (teachers, students, journalists, writers, and artists); social (athletes and entertainers); and economic (large- and small-business executives and entrepreneurs). There is no other way that blacks can maintain, nurture, and control our vested interests of cultural literacy, economic parity, and political power.

The United States is a nation in transition. The social costs of this transition will reverberate well into the 21st century, leaving no aspect of society untouched. The most important question to emerge in the 1990s will be this: Whose America is it? It will soon no longer be the sole domain of whites, who are fast becoming a minority. Nor will the United States become the domain of any other particular minority group.

We are crossing the color line because of immigration, high birthrates, and demographic trends. The 1980s will explode the myth of this country being a melting pot, illuminating already existing fault lines that separate blacks and non-English speaking minorities on one side, and whites on the other.

Asian and Hispanic immigration trends and birthrates will give the states of California, Florida, and Texas a combined total of 12 new seats in Congress. The Northeast and Midwest have suffered a population loss, which means that both regions will lose hundreds of millions of dollars in federal and state aid, tax revenues, and congressional and state legislative seats due to redistricting based on the 1990 census results.

In the South and Southwest, English-only amendments are supported by both blacks and whites, alienating them from their Spanish-speaking neighbors. In Miami, a city that has a Hispanic mayor in a state with a Hispanic governor, the black and Hispanic communities have been feuding over economic and political turf. In New York City, a black consumer boycott of two Korean grocery stores underscores the ambiguousness of Mayor David Dinkins' "gorgeous mosaic"—the term he uses to describe the city.

One major tension this scenario will exacerbate is how secular mainstream socioeconomic and political institutions can accommodate a changing racial and ethnic reality for which they were not designed. As the complexion of these institutions changes, who will control them? And with what values?

Political change in this country means a top-to-bottom change. Priorities must shift, attitudes must change, agendas must be replaced, and competition will increase. Political jockeying between whites and minorities, each hoping to take advantage of this emerging social landscape, has already begun. Integration has not prepared blacks for this changing reality; it has placed us in double jeopardy.

Forty years ago blacks put their trust in the courts and in the Congress. My generation, 10 years away from the 21st century, cannot trust these institutions. Virtually every program adopted over the last 20 years—affirmative action, quotas, set-asides—is under siege. Without addressing their individual merits, I see no evidence that these programs, or the executive orders, court decisions, and legislation that mandated them, can secure justice for blacks during the coming decade or into the next century.

A spiritual renaissance is what is needed among young African-American people. Any attempt at building racial and cultural institutions in our communities without a spiritual renaissance—a vibrant embrace of faith—will produce symbols but not substance. We will bear false witness to ourselves and to the nation. ■

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SEPARATE AND FREE

THE ROLE OF THE BLACK CHURCH IN INTEGRATION

by Eugene Rivers

THE QUESTION OF INTEGRATION has proven to be a considerably more complex matter than many of its advocates initially suspected when the United States Supreme Court handed down its opinion in the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* on May 17, 1954. At that time the court of Chief Justice Earl Warren held that "in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' had no place."

The day after the decision was handed down *The New York Times* ran a quite revealing story. It quoted Thurgood Marshall, who was then one of the principal legal strategists in the *Brown* case, predicting that as a result of this decision school segregation would be stamped out in no more than five years. He also informed the *Times* that by 1961 all forms of segregation in the United States would be eliminated.

THE BLACK CHURCHES HAVE NEVER CONFUSED SPIRITUAL FREEDOM WITH INTEGRATION.

Marshall's comments, which were not unrepresentative of much of middle-class leadership of the period, were based on two assumptions. The first assumption was that the American system was a racially democratic polity. This view also held that the United States under its current economic arrangements was committed to guaranteeing the civil rights of all its subjects, regardless of race, creed, or color. This belief, however, was maintained in the face of considerable historical and empirical evidence to the contrary.

The second assumption was somewhat more complex. The pro-integrationist legal strategy, which Marshall helped organize, was predicated upon a very particular philosophic understanding of the nature of equality. This view assumed that integration was the most desirable form of social equality, that social rights were indivisible from civil rights or political rights, and that absolute integration was to be preferred over political and institutional autonomy.

It should be noted and stressed here that the devastation now being visited upon millions of black lives among the growing underclass in our domestic colonies is in part a logical consequence of a previous generation's philosophical and political leadership failures. And those philosophical and leadership failures persist.

The black elites who were responsible for framing the policy rationales and legal strategy for the *Brown* decision sacrificed philosophical consistency as well as a prudent consideration of its long-term policy outcomes. Had the leadership of the NAACP permitted a wide-ranging debate at the time, the black community might have come up with a broader range of strategic options.

In purely constitutional terms, the heart of the matter in the *Brown* decision revolved around the ambiguity in the language of the provisions concerning equal protection under the law in the 14th Amendment of the Constitution. But what is fascinating with the benefit of historiographic hindsight is how deeply these black elites believed in the political system that had so victimized their community since their arrival on the shores of the empire.

With the *Brown* decision, the battleground shifted from the judicial to the legislative, from issues of education to questions of public accommodation and voting rights. The debate moved from the secular into the sacred, from the courtroom to the pulpit. It was two years after *Brown* in Montgomery that the black churches assumed center stage in the movement for integration.

THE INTEGRATIONIST THRUST of the civil rights movement was the product of a unique regional experience—the Southern historical experience—which underwent a massive agricultural and industrial transformation during the first half of the century. The economic modernization of the South laid, in part, the material basis for the emergence of black defiance and its white reaction. These developments in turn precipitated the electoral instability that provided the political opportunities for the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The mobilization of black church leadership to push for the passage of these bills was also part of this regional transformation. The rising expectations of an essentially middle-class leadership stratum converged with the concurrently shifting political requirements for the effective management of the region. What should be noted is the class-specific orientation of these Protestant church-based protest elites.

Black churches have never been monolithic institutions. They are complex class- and status-stratified organisms, reflecting the contradictory impulses that characterize the life of their adherents. They are a vast and far-reaching constellation of faith communities.

Among these communities are included such independent bodies as the National Baptist Convention USA, Inc., which estimates its membership at 6,820,000 people, with 30,221 churches and 29,864 ministers. The National Baptist Convention ranks as the largest black organization in the world. And the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, formerly known as the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, has 800,000 members, 2,380 churches, and 2,400 ministers. Among the remaining eight largest black denominations are the National Primitive Baptist Convention with its 450,000 members and 388 churches, as well as the 1.3 million black Roman Catholics.

Beyond the borders of these major denominations are countless other denominations, independent movements, and parachurch bureaucracies that make up the estimated 18 to 20 million African-American Christians in the United States. In addition to the rank-and-file membership is a broad variety of organizations and associations that have emerged. Most notable are the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the National Committee of Black Churches, Black Methodists for Church Renewal, the National Black Evangelical Association, and the National Office of Black Catholics—all of which have dealt to one degree or another with the question of integration at some point in their organizational evolution.

ON QUESTIONS OF FAITH, RELIGION, AND WORSHIP, AFRICAN AMERICANS HAVE CHOSEN, WITH MINOR EXCEPTIONS, SPIRITUAL AUTONOMY OVER INTEGRATION. THE MAJORITY OF BLACK PEOPLE HAVE KNOWN "OLE MASSA" TOO WELL TO TRUST HIM WITH ANYTHING AS IMPORTANT AS THEIR GOD.

THERE ARE THREE BASIC CATEGORIES of leadership that can provide us with some sense of how the black church has responded to the question of integration. One group is the intelligentsia: theologians, religious educators, seminarians and self-taught scholars, parachurch bureaucrats, administrative elites, SCLC, the National Conference of Black Churchmen, and Black Methodists for Church Renewal. Of the activist clergy of such organizations as SCLC and the National Conference of Black Churchmen, several intellectual figures emerged: Howard Thurman, George Edmund Haynes, Benjamin Mays, Nathan C. Scott, and Martin Luther King Jr. For purposes of the present discussion, it is appropriate to focus briefly upon King.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a figure whose views underwent considerable evolution. A product of the clerical sector of the educated Southern middle class, he initially subscribed to a liberal reformist vision characteristic of the Northeastern academic milieu in which he received his latter academic training. Thus, to appreciate his view of integration, as well as those he profoundly influenced, one must understand that there was a material basis for his worldview. His perspective was rooted in part in his privileged class experience and in the more generalized liberal optimism of the late 1950s and early 1960s.

There is of course more to the matter. To address properly the question of the black churches' positions on integration, one must consider theological factors: What is the moral and political meaning of African experience in the United States? One's response is likely to be shaped by whatever biblical or theological metaphor one employs as a hermeneutic lens through which to interpret the collective experience of one's group.

If, for example, one has lived a life in which there has been a material and emotional basis for viewing the larger society favorably, it is not likely that one uses Babylonian captivity as the political metaphor to describe the larger society. Therefore, what value the black churches placed upon the social goal of integration was to a considerable extent contingent upon their theological assessments of the American experience.

In turn their theological assessments were based upon the quality of the churches' critical analysis of the rules of the political game. The churches' assessments changed as did their political fortunes. But there had always been a contradiction within the souls of the elite. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. embodied the contradiction.

For King's pastoral vision did not speak to the experience of intense alienation of the colonized in the urban metropolitan centers in the country. And his images, symbols, and metaphors did not emanate from a dispassionate understanding of the cold political logic of an imperial power. This failure of the integrationists produced a leadership vacuum into which a new church movement would step; it would be called the Nation of Islam, and its bishop was the Honorable Elijah Muhammed.

Unlike the Baptist preachers, the Muslim ministers, symbols, and metaphors spoke to the political experiences of those in the bars, cell blocks, and back alleys of blackness. The theological language was the language of prophetic judgment. The hermeneutic lens through which they interpreted the American experience drew upon powerful biblical metaphors.

For them the black experience in the United States was akin to the Babylonian or Egyptian captivity. In this theological critique, they then raised a powerful theological question to the black churches. The Muslim asked, If the God of the Bible allowed the people of God to sanctify themselves from those nations of idolaters who worshiped wealth, power, and things, why was there an exception made in the case of a nation whose founding was based upon genocide, slavery, and imperialism?

ASIDE FROM THIS QUESTION, KING and the civil rights movement were being confronted by other difficulties. Integration produced problems at a practical level for the black church, which is the most racial institution in African-American society. Historian Carter G. Woodson observed in 1921 in his history of the black church that it was the only institution in which the black "was free to

exercise authority." He further commented that in the South there were white men who regretted "that immediately after the Civil War they permitted the Negroes to establish their own churches."

All historical and cultural research indicates that the black church as a separate and autonomous institution has been the organizational basis upon which our national identity as a nation within a nation is founded. African Americans have apparently concluded in matters of faith and spirituality that their institutions were better suited to meet their own needs. Some reasoned, quite correctly, that since whites fought so hard to keep God out of their churches there was no reason for them to fight to get in. In other words, self-segregation had its benefits.

Lloyd Wolf

Ironically, the black churches' own rank and file understood this better than their own elites. Had the black churches been desegregated, King might not have learned how to preach; Aretha Franklin might not have learned to sing; David Walker's famous appeal might have been sabotaged by some white liberal.

There is no survey data that I am aware of which suggests that the rank and file of the black denominations ever felt that for their spiritual well-being they needed to experience a "mutual sharing of power" or "integration in both ethical and political" terms with the white churches. Andrew M. Morris' study *Southern Civil Rights in Conflict* confirms this view. In a historical analysis of black and white Baptists on civil rights from 1947 to 1957, Morris discusses how in the late 1940s as the larger society turned toward the problem of race relations, blacks and whites in the South began to articulate two entirely separate civil religions. These two profoundly different visions of the meaning of America would clash as the civil rights movement collided with the psychocultural reality of white power.

Thus, the matter may be simply stated. On questions of faith, religion, and worship, African Americans have chosen, with minor exceptions, spiritual autonomy over integration. For them God has lived in the black house moving among "those of low-esteem." From the documented institutional preferences of black people, the majority, we may reasonably conclude, have known "ole massa" too well to trust him with anything as important as their God.

Therefore, in some cases self-segregation was spiritually, culturally, and economically beneficial. In their affirmation of a historically and culturally unique Christian experience, blacks have the catholic dimensions of the gospel message; and in their institutional affirmation of the validity of their otherness, they have in fact confirmed more than any other group in this country the universality of human experience. In their heroic and unavoidable struggle for equal access to public accommodations, education, and democratic rights, the black churches—with all of their obvious imperfections—have never confused spiritual freedom with integration.

IT IS NOW FAIRLY CLEAR that the preoccupation with integration beyond the pursuit of access to public accommodations and democratic rights by church-based protest elites proved to be detrimental to advancing the policy interest of the black poor. Nearly 40 years after *Brown* some blacks are worse off.

Much of the best advocacy work on behalf of the poor emanates from the black leadership of such predominantly white bodies as the Episcopal and United Methodist Churches and the United Church of Christ. Presently there is not much public discussion on the questions of economic power, inequality, and justice *within* the black church (with the exception of the Shrine of the Black Madonna, which still has connections to the UCC). Thus, as we confront the 21st century we confront the matter of the role the black churches play in the class oppression of the black poor.

The current crisis in the U.S. black community demands a concrete model of a radical black church that moves beyond academic rhetoric of liberation theology safely removed from the actual suffering of the black poor. We now need a radical reformation movement that challenges the black church leadership to live and theologize in spiritual and material solidarity with the black poor.

Our present crisis demands that these black elites should, following the examples of Dorothy Day, Elijah Muhammed, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, take their liberation and womanist theologies into the prisons, hospitals, bars, and back alleys of the black poor. Moving beyond the intellectual ghettoes of the elite academic institutions, we must now construct real programs and real churches for the poor. ■

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THE RHETORIC OF RACIAL HARMONY

FINDING SUBSTANCE IN CULTURE AND ETHNICITY

by Manning Marable

AMERICA'S SOCIETY is more thoroughly integrated today in terms of race relations than at any point in its entire history. Since 1964, the number of black elected officials has increased from barely 100 to 7,000. The number of African Americans enrolled in colleges and universities has quadrupled; the number of black-owned banks and financial institutions has increased tenfold; the percentage of African Americans in the middle class and professions has significantly expanded.

Perhaps the most striking changes in public perceptions of race have occurred in popular culture, social institutions, and the media. American music, theater, public education, sports, and the arts are now heavily influenced by the rhythms and patterns of African-American life. Black images in commercial advertisements are commonplace. Blacks remain underrepresented in the ownership and management of cultural and social institutions, but are nearly omnipresent as employees and prominent public representatives, particularly in the state sector.

THE CENTRAL CHARACTERISTIC OF RACE RELATIONS IN THE 1990s IS "INTERACTION WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING."

Despite these symbols of racial advancement, in recent years incidents of racist harassment, vigilante violence, and social disruption have escalated. Hundreds of African-American students have been victimized by intimidation or outright threats on university campuses across the country. White youth are forming "white student unions" at several institutions to push back affirmative action and the preferential recruitment of minorities as faculty and students.

Civil rights organizations point to a disturbing pattern of legal indictments and political harassment of black elected officials, and to the growth of violent incidents aimed against black-owned property and individuals in urban areas. Racial tensions in cities such as New York have culminated in a series of massive public demonstrations by both blacks and whites, with both sides accusing the other of "racism." A quarter century removed from the historic Civil Rights Act of 1964, which abolished legal racial discrimination in public accommodations, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which extended the electoral franchise to all Americans regardless of race, the goal of racial harmony and integration seems more distant than ever before.

What explains the racial paradox, the emergence of a black middle class and acceptance of black cultural achievements within the context of a deepening crisis of race relations in the society as a whole? Any analysis of the contemporary status of African Americans in the United States must begin with analysis of the accomplishments and the contradictions of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

The leaders of the desegregation social protest movement a generation ago mobilized millions with one simple demand—"freedom." In the context of the "Jim Crow" or racially segregated society of the South in the post-World War II period, freedom meant the elimination of all social, political, legal, and economic barriers that forced black Americans into a subordinate status.

Implicit in the demand for desegregation were several assumptions. Desegregation would increase opportunities for blacks in business, government, and society overall. Desegregated educational institutions would promote greater racial harmony and understanding between young people from different ethnic communities, which in turn would promote residential integration. Affirmative action policies, the strategy of compensating for past discrimination against minorities, would gradually increase the numbers of African Americans, Hispanics, and other people of color in administrative and managerial positions.

It was assumed that as African Americans escaped the ghetto and were more broadly distributed across the social class structure and institutions of society, racial tensions and bigotry would decline in significance. As blacks were more thoroughly integrated into the economic system, it was thought, the basis for racial confrontation would diminish.

The thesis above was fundamentally flawed in several key respects. First, desegregation did not benefit the entire black community uniformly. Black professionals and managers, those who had attended colleges and

technical schools, were the principal beneficiaries. Working-class African Americans also benefited: Incomes increased as new opportunities were created in upper-income levels of the labor force, and their children for the first time had access to higher education.

But opportunity in a capitalist society is always a function of social class position, which means ownership of capital, material resources, education, and access to power. For the unemployed, the poor, and those without marketable skills or resources; for those whose lives were circumscribed by illiteracy, disease, and desperation, "race" continued to occupy a central place as a factor in their marginal existence.

Legal desegregation contributed to the popular illusion that the basis for racial discrimination and conflict no longer existed. The abolition of racially separate residential districts, hotels, schools, and other public institutions convinced many white Americans that the "Negro question" had finally been firmly resolved. Black American leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. had always insisted upon the achievement of a "colorblind society." The passage of anti-discriminatory legislation had eliminated all basic impediments to the socioeconomic and cultural advancement of African Americans according to this view.

Thus, as many black leaders continued to speak out against current social injustices, or pointed to the growing economic disparities between blacks and the majority of middle-class whites, their complaints were easily dismissed as anachronistic, self-serving rhetoric. By raising the issue of racism, many whites now believed, blacks themselves must be "racist."

The American civil rights leadership and the black political establishment now find themselves in a quandary largely of their own making. Their failure to develop a body of politics representing a qualitative step beyond the discourse and strategies of the civil rights movement of a generation ago is directly linked to the poverty of their theoretical outlook.

THE CENTRAL THEORETICAL and conceptual weakness of this largely middle-class, African-American leadership is its inability to distinguish between *ethnicity* and *race*, and to apply both terms to the realities of American capital, power, and the state. African-American people are both an ethnic group (or more precisely, a national minority) and a racial group. Our ethnicity is derived from the cultural synthesis of our African heritage and our experiences in American society, first as slaves and subsequently as sharecroppers, industrial laborers, the unemployed, and now as the core of the post-industrial urban underclass in the semi-destroyed central cities of North America.

As black scholar W.E.B. DuBois observed nearly a century ago, black Americans are both African and American, "two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder." This central duality is at the core of our ethnic consciousness, forming the fundamental matrix for all expressions of African-American music, art, language patterns, folklore, religious rituals, belief systems, the structure of our families, and other culture manifestations and social institutions. Blackness in the cultural context is the expression and affirmation of a set of traditional values, beliefs, rituals, and social patterns, rather than physical appearance or social class position.

Race is a totally different dynamic, rooted in the structures of exploitation, power, and privilege. "Race" is an artificial social construction that was deliberately imposed on various subordinated groups of people at the outset of the expansion of European capitalism into the Western Hemisphere five centuries ago. The "racial" consciousness and discourse of the West was forged above the bowels of slave ships, as they carted their human cargoes into the slave depots of the Caribbean and the Americas. The search for agricultural commodities and profits from the extreme exploitation of involuntary workers deemed less than human gave birth to the notion of racial inequality.

In the United States, a race is frequently defined as a group of individuals who share certain physical or biological traits, particularly phenotype (skin color), body structure, and facial features. But race has no scientific validity as a meaningful biological or genetic concept. Beyond this, the meaning of race shifts according to the power relations between the racial groups.

For instance, in apartheid South Africa, Japanese people were considered by the regime as "white," whereas Chinese were classified as being "colored." In Brazil, a person of color could be "white," "mulatto," or "black," depending upon the individual's vocation, income, family connections, and level of education.

Even in rigidly segregated societies such as the American South before the modern civil rights movement, race was frequently situational—a function not just of physical appearance, but also of the explicit or implied power relations that connect the individual of color to local or external constituencies. In many segregated cities such as Washington, D.C., Arab and African diplomats and foreign representatives were permitted to stay in "whites only" hotels, which were strictly off-limits to local blacks. African Americans who owned property or who were well-respected professionals, university professors, or ministers were occasionally granted social privi-

leges extended solely to whites.

RACE, THEREFORE, IS NOT an abstract thing, but an unequal relationship between social aggregates, which is also historically specific. The subordinated racial group finds itself divorced from the levers of power and authority within the socioeconomic order. The oppressed racial group's labor power, its ability to produce commodities, is systematically exploited, chiefly through abnormally low wage rates. It is denied ownership of the major means of production. It lacks full access to sources of capital and credit. The racial group's political status is marginal or peripheral, as full participation and legislative representation are blocked.

Finally, dominant and subordinate racial categories are constantly reinforced in the behaviors and social expectations of all groups by the manipulation of social stereotypes and through the utilization of the legal system to carry out methods of coercion. The popular American myth of the Negro's sexual promiscuity, prowess, and great physical attributes, for example, was designed to denigrate the intellectual abilities and the scientific and cultural accomplishments of blacks.

The racist stereotype of the black race's inclination toward anti-social behavior, criminality, and violence reinforces the series of discriminatory codes, employment patterns, and legal harassment aimed at non-whites. Institutional and vigilante violence, including lynching, the death penalty, and the disproportionately large number of African Americans arrested for crimes that whites also commit, help to justify and reinforce the stereotypes.

RACIAL INTEGRATION HAS PRODUCED THE SYMBOLS OF PROGRESS AND THE RHETORIC OF RACIAL HARMONY WITHOUT THE SUBSTANCE OF EMPOWERMENT FOR THE OPPRESSED.

To be white in the United States says nothing directly about an individual's culture, ethnic heritage, or biological background. A society created to preserve "white culture" either would be very confused or tremendously disappointed. White culture does not exist. White power, privileges, and prerogatives within capitalist society do exist.

Whiteness is fundamentally a statement of the continued patterns of exploitation of subordinated racial groups which create economic surpluses for privileged groups. To be white means that one's "life chances," in the lexicon of American sociologists, improve dramatically. Any white person, regardless of personal appearance, income, or education, usually finds it much easier to establish credit, purchase better homes, and initiate businesses than the average non-white person.

To be white in the United States statistically means that police officers rarely harass you, that your life expectancy is significantly longer than non-whites, and that your children will probably inherit property and social position. Blackness in American racial terms has meant a hundred different insults, harassments, and liabilities experienced daily; living with the reality that a black university graduate will make less money in his or her lifetime than the average white graduate of secondary school; experiencing higher death rates due to the absence of adequate health care facilities in one's neighborhood; accepting the grim fact that, in 1990, a young white American male's statistical likelihood of becoming a victim of homicide is roughly one chance in 156, while a young black male's statistical chances are one in 20.

THE AMBIGUITY AND CONFUSION concerning the crucial differences between race and ethnicity within the United States are directly attributable to the uneven merger of the two concepts as they related to black Americans. People of African-American nationality, whose cultural patterns and social traditions were derived in part from Africa, were overdetermined externally as the subordinate racial category. Physical appearance and phenotype were convenient, if not always predictable, measures for isolating the members of the oppressed racial group, "the blacks."

For white Americans this racial-ethnic overdetermination did not occur for several reasons. White Americans originated from many different countries and cultures, ethnic intermarriage was frequent, and the rigid economic and legal barriers that confined blacks behind the walls of the ghetto usually did not exist. By the mid-20th century, millions of white Americans had no clear ethnic or cultural identity beyond vague generalizations. Their sense of aesthetics was derived largely from the lowest cultural common denominator—the mass media and the entertainment industry.

Whites' racial identity was ruptured from ethnicity, and was only politically or socially relevant as it affected issues of direct personal interest—such as whether a Hispanic or African-American family intended to purchase a home in their neighborhood, or whether their employer planned to initiate an affirmative-action hiring program for minorities. Whiteness was fundamentally a measure of personal privilege and power, not a cultural statement.

White capitalist America's cultural vacuity, its historical inability to nurture or sustain a vibrant "national culture," drawing upon the most creative elements of its various ethnic constituencies, help to explain the present paradox of desegregation. Millions of white Americans, devoid of their own cultural compass, have absorbed critical elements of African-American music, dance, literature, and language. They now accept black participation in professional athletics and extend acclaim to African-American film stars and entertainers. In a desperate search for collective identity, whites have mimicked blacks in countless ways, from the black-faced minstrels of the 19th century to the contemporary white musical groups singing reggae and rap.

But whites' affinity and tolerance for blackness are largely cultural, not racial. Many whites have learned to appreciate African-derived elements of music, dance, and religious rituals, but would not endorse the sharing of power or material privileges, which would undermine the

stratification of race.

For example, former director of the Republican Party's National Committee, the late Lee Atwater, was the architect of a viciously racist media campaign that was largely responsible for electing President Bush. Atwater's infamous television advertisement of convicted felon Willie Horton linked the specter of the black rapist to the Democrats' supposed weakness on law-and-order issues. Yet Atwater's much beloved personal hobby was playing the blues on his guitar, weakly imitating African-American blues artist B.B. King.

The central characteristic of race relations in the 1990s is "interaction without understanding." White students purchase the latest taped recordings of black singers and cheer the latest exploits of black athletes, while they bitterly reject the imposition of course requirements mandating classes in African-American politics, history, or literature. White employers encourage the recruitment of black junior executives in their firms, but would shudder at the prospect of minorities moving into their exclusive neighborhoods or joining their elite private clubs. White religious leaders espouse pious platitudes about ethnic understanding and racial reconciliation, while doing relatively little to bring their white, upper-class congregations into close contact with the gritty problems of the ghetto. Racial integration, within the framework of capitalism, has produced the symbols of progress and the rhetoric of racial harmony without the substance of empowerment for the oppressed.

PERHAPS THE GREATEST irony in this post-civil rights situation is that African Americans born after 1960 frequently have great difficulty identifying the realities of contemporary oppressive race and class structures because of the transformation of white racial etiquette. No white politician, corporate executive, or religious leader now uses the term "nigger" in public. African Americans coming to maturity in the 1980s and 1990s have never personally experienced Jim Crow segregation. They cannot express how they feel to be denied the right to vote because their electoral rights are guaranteed by law. They have never personally participated in street demonstrations, boycotts, picket lines, and seizures of government and academic buildings. Few have tasted the pungent fumes of tear gas or felt the fiery hatred of racist mobs. The absence of a personal background of struggle casts a troubled shadow over the current generation of black Americans who are poorly equipped to grapple with the current complexities of racial and class domination.

Integration also crippled African Americans in the context of their "cultural literacy." Under traditional racial segregation, the strict barriers that were established forced a wide variety of professions and social classes into intimate interaction. Black physicians had to look for patients in the black community. African-American attorneys depended upon black clients. Black storeowners looked to blacks for patronage.

Black social organizations, civic associations, and religious institutions reflected the broad spectrum of social class, from custodians and sanitation workers to school teachers and civil servants. The sense of shared suffering and collective cooperation provided the basis for an appreciation of the community's racial identity and heritage. African-American history was taught in segregated schools and churches, and pictures of prominent black leaders were frequently displayed.

Denied access to the white media, blacks established their own network of race-oriented publications. A separate cultural and artistic underground developed in the cities, creative enclaves that produced the classical legacy of modern jazz and the urban blues.

But as the racial boundaries were liberalized and as white public discourse became largely race-neutral, the terrain for black cultural awareness diminished. Young African Americans no longer were forced to confront their ethnicity or cultural history. In effect, we are witnessing the development of a substantial segment of the African-American population which is "post-black"—without any cultural awareness, historical appreciation, or political commitment to the traditions, customs, values, and networks that have been the basis for black identity in America.

IN ALL RACIALLY BIFURCATED societies, the government, legal system, major political parties, and other institutions of state power are generally designed—explicitly or implicitly—to preserve white power and perpetuate non-white domination. In the United States, the concept of racial superiority and prerogatives still retains tremendous influence within the actual power relations and public policies of governmental structures and political parties.

By the decade of the 1980s, the racial polarization in America's political system had crystallized and hardened into an apartheid-type, two-tiered political system. Blacks, as a racial group, frequently will vote for white liberal candidates over black office-seekers, if in their judgment the former's agenda is progressive.

But most whites, taken as a racial group, find it difficult if not impossible to vote in large numbers for any African-American candidate, regardless of his or her qualifications, experience, or education. When white Democrats are confronted at the polling booth with a choice between a black Democrat who clearly articulates their class and political interests versus a white Republican, the vast majority will consistently defect to the white candidate.

Under the leadership of former President Ronald Reagan, who had vigorously opposed civil rights legislation, affirmative action, and other racial reforms of the 1960s, the Republican Party was transformed into a multiclass, white united front, dedicated largely to the ideology of conservatism, anti-communism abroad, and the preservation of the hegemony of corporate capital over labor.

This electoral drift to the ideological Right has influenced the behavior of a growing number of black politicians, who seek to further their own careers outside of the boundaries of traditional civil rights politics. Positioning themselves further to the Right to capture the support of upper-class white voters, they are increasingly advancing positions that are alien to the black freedom struggle. A prime example of this nascent trend is Douglas Wilder, governor of Virginia, the Southern state that was the home of the Confederacy during the Civil War.

Wilder's 1989 electoral campaign largely ignored the state's black electorate and concentrated exclusively on winning one third of the state's white vote. This percentage, combined with a strong black turnout, would guarantee victory over his Republican opponent. To achieve this goal, Wilder reversed himself on many liberal policy positions he had taken previously. During the campaign, he embraced the death penalty, opposed the extension of statehood status to the District of Columbia, and supported anti-union right-to-work laws.

Wilder's case illustrates two political realities of the post-civil rights period. First, with the demise of racial segregation, the black community ironically lacks structures of accountability to modify or effectively check the public or political behavior of its own elected officials. And second, growing numbers of African Americans in government, the legal system, and political parties will attempt to transcend their own racial designation as black for the purpose of furthering their own careers.

This creates an ever-growing sense of alienation and frustration for the millions of African-American poor, working class, and unemployed, still trapped in the ghetto, who see little real significance in the elevation of a Wilder to high office. Black representation in government rarely improves the quality of their lives, and their actual material conditions have become worse overall since 1980. The "post-black politicians" are irrelevant to the problems of the oppressed.

The challenges of race, class, and power confronting black Americans are far more complicated than Martin Luther King Jr. ever anticipated when he stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial at the August 1963 March on Washington, D.C., delivering his "I Have a Dream" speech. The objective should not be the realization of a utopian, colorblind society, but a democratic social order that seeks to achieve several goals.

First, democratic principles must be extended from the electoral system into the structures of the economy and social order, making a job or guaranteed income a human right. Also, public health-care facilities, housing, and access to transportation must be available to all. Finally, ethnicity must be distinctly separated from race, which would preserve America's diverse cultural and ethnic heritages while abolishing all forms of institutional discrimination that are justified by the perpetuation of racial categories. We must destroy "race" without uprooting culture and ethnicity.

WILL WHITES BE WILLING to give up their centuries of power and privilege over oppressed African Americans, Hispanics, and other people defined by racial categories of subordination? Will the white elites who control the banks and financial institutions, the factories and corporations, the exclusive real estate and country clubs, recognize that a truly multicultural democracy can only exist with the fundamental redistribution of power within the economic system and the government?

This could require a radical restructuring of capitalism itself, as those most disadvantaged groups generate new social protest movements for a more equitable division of resources. It is also possible that white American politicians, corporate leaders, educators, and the intelligentsia will attempt to follow what might become the post-apartheid South African model for race relations: non-white domination of the government and public institutions, and the concomitant expansion of the black middle class, with the preservation of white domination over the legal system, private property, and the economy.

What is the role of the religious community in addressing America's crisis of race and class inequality? It is relatively easy to stand before one's congregation and solicit funds for a Hispanic or African-American vocational training center, or to request canned goods and second-hand clothing for minority women on AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children). It is a very different question to challenge one's peers and associates to question the preferential status and material benefits they possess simply by the fact of being white.

There will be no racial peace in America until millions of whites come to terms with the uncomfortable truth that black oppression, poverty, and high unemployment rates are hardly accidental, or symptoms of an absence of the work ethic among blacks. Institutional racism and class domination are structural and elaborate, benefiting certain privileged classes at the expense of common misery of others.

Religious institutions' major contribution to human relations should be a commitment to the achievement of the deconstruction of white racial privilege within society as a whole. More succinctly, this would mean a commitment to "racial suicide" for the social category "white."

So long as millions of white Americans confuse race with ethnicity and perceive their world in immutably racial terms, tied to an eclectic mixture of biological myths, racist stereotypes, and IQ tests, they will be unable to fully overcome their own crippled consciousness. And without a cultural metamorphosis among middle-class whites, who are forced to confront the terrible social and economic consequences of institutional racism, no racial dialogue or peace with the ghetto will be possible.

Without social justice, there will be no peace. ■

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EXPOSING FALSE DISTINCTIONS

BLACK WOMEN AND MEN SHARE A SIMILAR STRUGGLE

by Delores S. Williams

FOR MANY BLACK PEOPLE, integration is almost an obsolete word. It is certainly not a goal for which oppressed black women now strive.

Over the last 30 years, if female veterans of the 1960s civil rights movement have learned anything, they have learned how integration works in America with regard to black women. A few with middle-class training, values, and goals are taken into the white-dominated institutions of the society. Allowed presence and the illusion of power and acceptance, they become instruments the institutions try to use to accomplish two goals: to show the public that the particular institution is neither racist nor sexist and to control other black people, the non-middle class "unruly outsiders" (female and male) pressing the institution to change what the "outsiders" take to be discriminatory policies.

Black women have learned that integration for them has meant the same as it has meant for black men. Unless they are constantly on guard, they can become "tokens" by which social institutions attempt to reinforce the American myth that only a few blacks are intelligent enough or educable enough to be trained for success at the high decision-making levels of the society.

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So, if by integration one means the thorough interconnection of masses of black people and masses of white people in interconnected social systems for the purpose of achieving the well-being of all the people, there has been no real integration of black people as a whole into American society. The question here, then, is not how integration has helped or hindered African-American women's activities and relationships. The question is, How has black people's contact (not integration) with American social systems and movements impacted upon those areas of black life in which black women have historically focused their time, energy, and concern?

There are three areas of black women's concern and three American social systems that need to be reviewed here. The areas of concern are the education of black children in what were supposed to be integrated public schools; the availability of adequate work to support black women and their families properly; and the relation between black women and black men. The American social systems and movements impacting these areas of concern are the public education system, the economic structure of American society, and the feminist movement in the society.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND "INTEGRATION"

THE ALARMING AND DEPRECIATING condition of public school education in America can, in part, be attributed to the fallacious assumption most people made in 1954 when the Supreme Court decision integrated the nation's public schools. Many people thought integration of black children into predominantly white school systems automatically meant better education for black children.

From the beginning, however, there was a skewed notion of what integration meant. It was supposed to bring black children into already existing patterns of mainline American culture (read white) and introduce them to white models of thinking, acting, and accomplishment that—if taken seriously by black students—would prepare them for success in the educational process and in the world.

Few educators understood the extent to which integration had to be a two-way street if black children were to excel in the educational systems. That is, not only did black children have to be introduced to and accepted in the Eurocentric culture dominating in the public school systems. These systems, in turn, also had to be integrated by patterns of African-American culture and African-American models of intellect, accomplishment, and moral perspective. This would mean that for proper integration

to occur in America, both black and white children would, in their educational careers, have to experience a process of integration at both physical and intellectual levels.

Because this notion of "integration as a two-way street" has not prevailed in America's public schools, many black children have been unable to make bridges from their own African-American world to the Euro-American culture that dominates in the educational materials used in most public (and private) schools. Too often, many teachers in these schools have made the same mistake that Christian missionaries make. They try to inculcate alien thought and values into indigenous culture without taking into consideration the significance of indigenous values for determining how the indigenous person views the world and copes with it. Needless to say, the one-way integration method in American public schools has failed to educate African-American children properly.

It has also failed to equip teachers with knowledge of what Bell Hooks in her book *From Margin to Center* calls cultural codes. This is knowledge of those patterns in a particular culture that cause people of the culture to think and act as they do. Lack of this knowledge causes many American teachers to demonstrate great insensitivity to the educational needs of children who are not white and not middle class.

The reactions of some black mothers to the insensitivity of some white teachers demonstrates the frustrating effect this skewed, one-way "integration" method in American education has had upon the mothers and their children. On October 27, 1985, *The New York Times Magazine* published an article by a middle-class black mother protesting about a play performed by the students at the predominantly white "integrated" school her child attended. All the black children played the part of monkeys and wore no masks. A white child was cast as a gorilla and wore a mask.

TO ADDRESS THE ISSUES OF THE FEW, INDIVIDUAL, PROFESSIONAL BLACK WOMEN WORKING AND LIVING AMONG MASSES OF MIDDLE- AND UPPER-CLASS WHITES IS TO MISTAKE TOKENISM FOR REAL INTEGRATION.

This kind of casting revealed not only the insensitivity of the white teachers responsible for the play. It also revealed that racist and stereotypical thinking was part of the intellectual processes of those teachers attempting to educate black children in what was supposed to be an integrated school system. In the folklore of American racism, the connection of black people with apes, monkeys, and gorillas has been made for many years.

I, as a black mother, have been confronted with the task of showing my female child how to deal with her white drama teacher's way of excluding her and the other black children from participation in a school play because "there were no black parts in the play." The play was Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This kind of discouragement of children can lead them to begin to doubt their ability to achieve, foster low self-esteem among black children, and lead them to give up interest in developing their own creative potential.

Black women's historic interest and participation in the education of their children have been greatly affected by the kind of alienation between the student's home and school that has accompanied the so-called integrated school. Post-1960s school officials (teachers and principals) do not visit homes to get to know something about the parents, neighborhood, home environment, and culture from which the child comes. Rather, school officials—often coming from a social and cultural location different from black children—have depended upon parent-teacher meetings at the school to provide the introduction to the child's home, neighborhood, and cultural environment.

Of course, this kind of introduction can only be superficial. The lack of meaningful contact between home and school often results in alienation obvious in the kind of acting out done by some students in public schools.

ENTER THE PICTURE OF ECONOMICS

THE SECOND AREA of concern of black women directly affects their quality of life and that of their families. Getting and holding jobs that pay adequate wages has been a continuous struggle for both black women and black men.

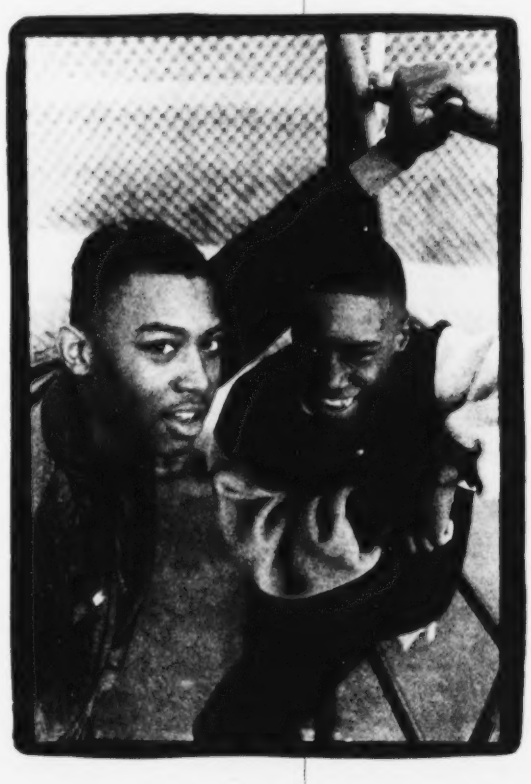
Because of strong anti-black attitudes in America and because of the capitalistic structure of economics in the society, black women (and black men) have been the economic base upon which many other groups develop sound economies for themselves. This has especially been the case for immigrant groups that have come to America, initially opened businesses in the black community, gotten wealthy, given nothing back to the black community, and then moved beyond the black community to be integrated, as a group, into the mainline American economy.

Many Jewish, Italian, and Irish immigrant groups followed this pattern of economic development in the United States. Because black people, since slavery, were identified as the economic foundation upon which others in the society were to build, black people as a group have lagged behind in economic development. A few individual black women and men have managed to amass the financial resources to provide a positive and productive quality of life for themselves and their families—to get the jobs or obtain the financial backing from banks for businesses that are denied to the masses of black people.

It is not overstatement to claim that the most segregated and racially discriminating area of American life is the economic sector—including in that sector the unemployment, business, and financial veins controlling the flow of society's wealth. True enough, a few black women and men have been integrated into this flow. But very, very few are in the high-level decision-making areas that determine the route of the flow of wealth.

Black people, as a whole, still are largely confined to the employment area at very low levels. That is, they mostly work for someone else and are paid the lowest wage possible for some of the hardest, "back-breaking" work. Inasmuch as technology has eaten up many menial jobs, large numbers of black men and women are without employment.

So, it is more than ludicrous to use the term "integration" when referring to black women's and black men's relation to economic life and resources in America. It is just as absurd to suggest that real differences exist between black women's and black men's experience in the employment, business, and financial sectors of American economic life, even though black women's advancement in all areas is affected by sexism.



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For example, one day's scanning of the media industry on the East Coast reveals the absurdity of black female-black male distinctions with regard to advancement in the industry. Television provides a few black news commentators—a few more black women than black men because "women are in" due to the feminist movement in this country. But no black national news anchors appear on a daily basis.

Besides the reruns of *The Cosby Show* and a new integrated soap opera called *Generations*, there are precious few black people on daytime television. Prime time is even worse. White newspapers seldom present black life as more than black crime.

There are, then, a handful of black women and black men employed in the East Coast media. But in terms of all economic life in America—employment, business, and finance—it is as if the national intentionality is for black people to be thoroughly grounded in belief in the merits of individualism. Therefore, the pattern of "integration" has been to allow a select few black men and women to reap some of the financial benefits of an American capitalist economy. In effect, this amounts to dangling a "goody" just beyond the reach of the masses of black people who themselves have been conditioned to believe that each and every one of them can, with more effort, grab the goody.

Reality, however, attests to something far different. Black people, as a whole, are not allowed full participation in the country's economic life.

FEMINISM AND THE TRICKLE-DOWN EFFECT

A THIRD AREA of black women's concern has been the relations between themselves and black men. The contemporary feminist movement has been given press and media exposure that has introduced to all groups the subject of the character and quality of female-male relations.

The African-American community, in its educated and middle-class sectors, has responded to this introduction. In the last five years or so, much more attention has been given to the problems, issues, and contributions of black women. Black female writers such as Alice Walker (*The Color Purple* and *The Temple of My Familiar*) and Toni Morrison (*Sula* and *Beloved*) have kept black women's issues before the community. To my knowledge, however, no black female writer has considered the issue of black women and integration. My suspicion is that black women writers do not address this issue because there has been no serious integration of black women as a group into society or into the white feminist community.

But the feminist movement, which has been mostly a freedom movement of white middle-class women, has provided useful categories for assessing the quality of relationships between black women and black men. When feminist thinkers lifted up patriarchy as a structure of domination in women's lives, they provided an instrument by which black women and other women of color in America could begin to name and analyze the nature of the particular oppression they felt in their relationships to men and to the male-dominated societies in which they live.

Yet it must be admitted that feminism in America has remained basically a white phenomenon. The advantages the movement has obtained for women have mostly gone to white women. Therefore, in line with most white freedom movements in America (for example, the labor union movement), feminism has done its share in maintaining white supremacy rather than causing real integration to occur between black women and white women, between black people and white people.

Finally, what must be said about black women and integration in America is that integration has never occurred for them as a group. Therefore, it is impossible to address, in any honest way, the effects of integration upon black women as a whole. To address the issues of the few, individual, professional black women working and living among masses of middle- and upper-class whites is to mistake tokenism for real integration of black and white people.

Perhaps it is enough to say that integration is an American myth about social organization that has never been anywhere near realization. Black people, female and male, are right to question the value of the persistence of the myth in American consciousness, black and white. ■

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STALLED OUT IN HISTORY

THE PAST AND FUTURE OF INTEGRATION

by Harold W. Cruse

ON JUNE 23, 1953, it was reported in *The New York Times* that the NAACP had officially established integration as the association's programmatic policy of pursuing civil rights within the legal framework of the "separate but equal" doctrine growing out of the Supreme Court decision in the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case of 1896.

This change in policy occurred during the last months of the Truman administration. Eisenhower Republicans won the election in November 1952. Two years later came the *Brown* decision of 1954, and, in retrospect, it might appear from the civil rights record that the NAACP—as early as 1952—was changing its declared policies in prescient anticipation of the Supreme Court's coming change of heart toward overturning the *Plessy* doctrine.

THE TERM "INTEGRATION" WAS HARDLY TO BE HEARD OR READ—IT WAS NOT A PART OF THE EARLY CIVIL RIGHTS VOCABULARY.

Following the *Brown* decision came the upsurge of civil rights protest activities of the 1960s, but it remained a question as to how many of the new black activists actually understood the legal and constitutional ramifications behind the Supreme Court's overturning of *Plessy v. Ferguson*'s separate but equal doctrine by way of the Brown decision, which made the integration of public school systems the "law of the land."

The *Plessy v. Ferguson* separate but equal doctrine was handed down by the Supreme Court in 1896. The decision was the result of a suit brought against the state of Louisiana by Homer Adolph Plessy, a New Orleans black of mixed French and African-American heritage. The presiding judge of the Louisiana Court prior to the Supreme Court's decision was John H. Ferguson. Plessy's legal suit opposed a New Orleans ordinance that would legalize a railroad company's right to impose racially separate railroad-car facilities for blacks and whites in state and interstate travel.

Following Plessy's appeal the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Louisiana court's decision to legalize the railroad company's right to establish the system of separate facilities for blacks and whites, provided the facilities were "equal" in terms of accepted standards of passenger accommodations. According to the Supreme Court, such a racially separate accommodation was not, essentially, a legal or substantive violation of the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment of the Constitution. However, the end result was that the high court's decision both legitimized and encouraged the pervasive spread of legally imposed (Jim Crow) segregation throughout the entire South, not only in railroad travel but also in all other areas of Southern institutional, political, educational, social, cultural, and economic life.

It has to be remembered that prior to the 1890s race relations in the South were fluid and indecisive. It was not until after the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision that unqualified and rigid segregation evolved into the Southern states' way of life.

The real issue here is that, legally, the separate but equal doctrine could not, did not, make it socially possible, or economically possible, for a railroad company to render equal facilities to whites and blacks on a railroad train any more than the Southern states could render equal facilities to blacks and whites in public school education in terms of facilities, tax appropriations, or equal pay for teachers.

On June 23, 1953, *The New York Times* said, "NAACP, setting integration as a goal, drops the 'separate but equal' theory." On June 24 it said, "NAACP plans 10-year anti-segregation program." On June 25 it said, "NAACP plans no suits for separate facilities." And later in June the *Times* said, "Thurgood Marshall urges NAACP to help communities implement court bans on segregation."

These reports in the media, though an accurate gauge of the NAACP's changing civil rights temper in the early 1950s, were somewhat misleading on the question of integration as social policy. In the first place, the NAACP had not, at least since the 1930s, accepted separate but equal as a matter of policy principle. The NAACP had never accepted segregation, either *de facto* or *de jure*. Working within the framework of separate but equal was, for the NAACP leadership, a pragmatic policy of temporary accommodation to the realities of segregation.

Segregation was not only legally sanctioned in the South, it was also socially sanctioned by dominant whites

both North and South. Anti-segregation sentiments were expressed through such slogans as "racial equality," "anti-discrimination," and "equal rights." But the term "integration" was hardly to be heard or read—it was not a part of the civil rights vocabulary. When did the concept of integration emerge?

THE RECORD REVEALS THAT THE term "integration" as NAACP social policy appears in 1940 in response to the government's Selective Service Act. The United States was shaping up for World War II with a new draft law. The NAACP responded by insisting that the War Department eliminate segregated Army units. But as in World War I, the War Department refused. The NAACP demanded that the government racially integrate the armed forces, and thus did "integration" enter the post-World War II civil rights lexicon.

It should be noted that Roosevelt, who had delivered the famous Executive Order 8802 in 1941 outlawing racial discrimination in hiring practices for federally financed defense industries, did not buck the military on the question of segregated Army units. This was left for Harry Truman, who in July 1948 issued Executive Order 9981, directing the military to eliminate racial segregation immediately. Although the military hedged, it was because of the Korean War that the military found it easier to implement the desegregation of the military.

One of the factors leading to military desegregation in the Korean War was that unlike previous wars, the United States was fighting a non-white nation, and had no "racial" qualms about using blacks liberally as infantry. This was not the military's sentiment when the United States was fighting against white European nations.

Thus, on the question of integration it has to be remembered that it was Truman, not Roosevelt, who had furthered civil rights by setting up the first governmental Civil Rights Commission in 1947 and in 1948 issued an executive order that was mainly responsible for the popularization of the concept of integration in daily use. From that point on until the early 1950s, the word "integration" became more and more synonymous with civil rights when it had not always been so.

It was also for these reasons that the NAACP was first emboldened to announce that integration was its official new social policy in civil rights—a signal departure from the separate but equal legal doctrine to which the NAACP had always adopted an ambivalent accommodation. This was because although the NAACP had never philosophically embraced *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the association possessed no legal, constitutional, or practical activist means of fighting the doctrine until provided such means by the *Brown* decision of 1954.

But if the NAACP and its philosophical supporters among blacks had no legal way of opposing segregation or a separate but equal policy, their accommodation or ambivalence registered a consensual opposition to any segregationist doctrine. Simply adopting the philosophical stance of pro-integration did not mean, *ipso facto*, that the black (or white) adherents of integration possessed any such thing as a philosophically consensual or socially implemental policy approach to what later came to be known as "full integration." In effect, the NAACP had simply extended its former concept of integration, applicable to U.S. military policy, to the projection of integration as its general social policy.

John Spragens Jr.

Generally speaking, blacks were almost as ambivalent toward the implied meanings of "full integration" as the traditional NAACP had been toward the implied intents of the separate but equal doctrine. Of course, the *Brown* decision, which legally zeroed in on one tangible, visible social institution—the public school systems—for experimental integration, would give the NAACP at least

one objective social arena in which to carry out the court's mandated experiment in the "theory and practice" of racial integration. However, public school education, or education in general, while a crucial and important institutional aspect of our multifaceted social makeup, represents only one feature, so to speak, of our political, economic, and cultural aggregation of social structures. There are many others, for example, corporations, public housing agencies, real estate housing agencies, sports management firms, voluntary associations, labor marketing firms, political brokerage firms, governmental agencies, organized religious groups, professional organizations, restricted neighborhood residential groups.

AMERICAN SOCIETY, WHICH IS MULTI-RACIAL, MULTIETHNIC, AND MULTICULTURAL, MAY HAVE REACHED ITS INTERNAL LIMIT, OR SATURATION POINT, ALLOWABLE FOR RACIAL INTEGRATION AS THE NAACP ONCE DEFINED IT.

DURING THE LATE 1940s and up to 1954, the nation was, generally, in an uproar of racial conflict, especially in the South. Most of the clashes had to do with the integration aspects of public services in transportation and racial exclusion in restaurants, barber shops, hotels, recreation centers, auditoriums, and airports. One of the prominent areas of conflict in integration practices was in sports, both professional and collegiate. Riots erupted over racially mixed tennis matches; scheduled football games between schools were canceled because a team fielded black players. Racist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan mounted threats against white establishments and agencies that yielded to integration efforts.

After 1942, however, it was the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), rather than the NAACP, that was in the forefront of integrating public places, especially in the North—18 years before the black students' Greensboro, North Carolina "sit-ins" of 1960. During this postwar period, racial integration in terms of actual practice was occurring, as historian E. Franklin Frazier described it, in those areas which were "secular" as opposed to "sacred."

"Secular" relations referred to the way people of both races related or intermingled in the streets, in places of amusement, on streetcars, subways, trains, and buses, and in restaurants, commercial establishments, stores, and other public places. This stage of integration was described as "secondary" or "secular" because the settings were more or less impersonal.

The next stage, described as "sacred" or "primary," was ushered in by the *Brown* decision, which ordered integration in what was considered one of the more "sacred" of social institutions (along with churches, clubs, associations, fraternities, and the family). From that point through the 1960s and into the 1980s, the progress of racial integration as public or social policy can be seen as an ongoing and subtly changing thematic process that has left the majority of the black population stranded and stalled at the very edges of the institutional battlegrounds, while the inner sanctums of institutional power and prestige—political, economic, cultural, and educational—were protected from change.

If one looks at this integrative process in terms of its social history, in terms of its implied intents and objectives, and also in terms of its long-range feasibilities in the struggle against segregation, certain factors must be kept in mind. What Frazier saw in 1957 as "sacred" has now been congealed by the ingathering of these "sacred" institutions into a more forbidding and exclusive inner sanctum of economic and political power. Only a few selected blacks are permitted to integrate into these "sacred" domains.

It cannot be denied that blacks (often irrespective of class origins) have been integrated through several of those secondary stages, as Frazier described them, into vastly broader participation levels than was possible in 1950, 1960, 1970, and 1980. Here, one must cite such areas as the arts, sports, education, and politics. Yet, vast numbers of blacks who were never touched by "trickle-down" benefits of civil rights victories and desegregation can still claim that racism and segregation are still realities in American society.

We still hear the voices of our black nationalism ideologists who eschewed the imperatives of integration in favor of various forms of separatism. However, these same separatist tendencies do not put into practice what they preach by actually rejecting the apparent fringe benefits of integration.

Such integrationist-separatist pronouncements force us all to live with the fact that white-inspired segregation and black- inspired separatism are not to be equated as analogues in our "theory and practice" of full racial integration as the future culmination of civil rights or as the ultimate goal of complete "racial equality." What it all might mean is that after nearly 40 years of civil rights—of integrationism—since the *Brown* decision, we might have reached the societal limitations, the societal saturation points, for racial integration as it was perceived by the NAACP in 1953. It might mean that the notion of "full integration" was a chimera to begin with—a mirage of racial equality on the democratic social-change horizon. This raises the controversial question: Is full racial integration really necessary in the interests of racial democracy?

IN ORDER TO ANSWER this question cogently, even on a provisional premise of inquiry, we must re-examine the ideological nature of the integrationist-civil rights leadership at its very inception. This should not be a critically pejorative exercise motivated by partisan judgments based on notions of social, racial, political, or cultural ethics. Ethically or morally, there is nothing anti-humanistic in the concept of racial integration as a social or racial ideal. But as Robert C. Smith, a perceptive social investigator at San Francisco State University recently suggested, the problem with the civil rights-integrationist leadership (the NAACP and its philosophical supporters) was:

The ideology of liberal integration, unlike its radical and nationalist counterparts, lacks a tradition of a self-conscious set of ideas, doctrines and myths that have been passed down from generation to generation. Rather

integrationist thinking, like its patron ideology in the larger society, tends to be ad hoc, characterized by philosophical pragmatism....The ideology has been developed on the run, without systematic attention to problems of causation or internal consistency or coherence.

Nothing bears witness to the soundness of this critical assessment of integrationist social philosophy more than a look at the historical circumstances in which the NAACP first projected integrationism in terms of social and/or racial policy. It was in connection with its demand for the elimination of segregation in the U.S. military by the proposed policies of inducting blacks into the Army on a non-segregated basis. Such a policy would, if adopted by the War Department, have eliminated the long-standing tradition of segregated "all-black regiments."

During the 1930s, when the NAACP was initiating its first legal efforts to assemble its school segregation cases leading to *Brown*, the term "integration" rarely, if ever, cropped up in black intellectual or political literature. However, some 36 years later, it is both ironic and symptomatic of the essential meaning of racial integration in terms of its present and future implications that integration's most prominent success story has been the integration of blacks in the U.S. military—the very first social category cited by the NAACP in pressing for federal government-sponsored racial integration. In 1940, it was not the public school system (*Brown*), nor public transportation, nor public housing for which the NAACP pressed its demands for integration or desegregation.

But more ironic is that the present-day inheritors of the NAACP's early civil rights programming reject both the significance and importance of the armed forces' success in integrating blacks, even though the armed forces have integrated blacks to a degree that outstrips any other sector of the country's biracial encounters. In the May 1987 issue of *Atlantic Monthly*, Charles C. Moskos reported that "some 400,000 blacks serve in an active-duty force of 2.1 million":

Most of these men and women serve in the enlisted ranks, many as non-commissioned officers, or NCOs, and an increasing number can be found in the officer corps. Blacks occupy more management positions in the military than they do in business, education, journalism, government or any other significant sector of American society. The armed services still have race problems, but they are minimal compared with the problems that exist in other institutions, public or private....

The estrangement between civilian black leadership and the black officers in the military is mutual....Black officers view some aspects of the civilian black leadership's agenda as highly dubious. Black officers distrust black leaders in civilian life who would seek advancement through racial politics or as supplicants of benevolent whites.

IT MAY WELL BE that the general conclusion to be drawn from the ironies that becolored the contemporary outcome of racial integration is that the 50-year outcome

of the integrative process has been for it to reach the societal boundaries of its inherent possibilities. The suggestion here is that American society, which is multiracial, multiethnic, and multicultural, has reached its internal limit, or saturation point, allowable for racial integration as the NAACP once defined it.

The United States is not anymore a simplistic black vs. white encounter (in political, economic, and cultural terms). In present-day America, what groups (whites, blacks, Indians, Japanese, Chinese, Latinos, immigrants, white ethnics) are going to integrate with whom? And for what compelling reasons?

As the original prototype of the disadvantaged racial minority, the civil rights banners of integration have been blurred from recognition by the new, contending banners of other racial and ethnic group demands for pluralistic comity—not biracial equity—of political, economic, cultural, educational, and other rewards in America's 21st century. In this regard it is well that blacks, as a minority group, downplay the significance of whatever individual successes have been achieved via integration (even intermarriage assimilationism, which is peripheral to fundamental group problems).

For black leaders it may well be that they can refuse to swallow the implications of the integration successes of the military, just so long as it is understood that the U.S. military, as an institution, is but a reverse mirror of the societal culture from which the military draws its elements. As such, it hardly represents a future projection of who the United States might become in terms of integration. Thus future black leadership options lie in the direction of black political, economic, and cultural group consolidation—not for separatism, but for group plural accommodation to the changing face of racial and ethnic configurations taking place before our very eyes in America today. ■

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STUDY SESSION 6 / QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. A rarely challenged assumption among whites—perhaps especially among white liberals—is that integration has historically been and continues to be the best antidote to racial inequality and injustice. The authors in this section question that assumption. How have these critiques challenged your own assumptions and beliefs about integration? Have you always assumed that people of color should simply be assimilated into white structures? Have you assumed that a fundamental transformation of society must occur in order for the contributions of all to be included?

2. Jim Wallis describes integration as the white power structure's attempt to contain, control, and reduce the potential impact of the civil rights movement. Do you see any signs that this has been the case? Has the civil rights movement's impact been limited because of increased integration? Has the "success" of some individuals hurt the chances for empowerment and equal advancement for many?

3. The end of legalized segregation, as Bob Hulteen explains, also meant the demise of many black institutions. What do you think are some ways out of the "homemade debt crisis" the article describes?

4. Why does Anthony Parker consider the question of integration to be essentially a *spiritual* question—not merely a political, economic, or social issue—for young African Americans?

5. In matters of faith, religion, and worship, many African Americans have chosen autonomy over integration. Eugene Rivers maintains this has been spiritually, culturally, and economically beneficial to the black community. What implications does this have for broader social policy?

6. Political scientist Manning Marable describes the central characteristic of race relations in the '90s as "interaction without understanding." What are ways that you, your community, or your organization could seek better understanding across racial lines, and how might that lead to change in race relations?

7. In the areas of education, economics, and feminism, integration has failed to accomplish its goals, according to Delores Williams. What are the reasons for the failure in each of the three sectors, and why is it impossible to assess the effects of integration upon black women as a group? Explain.

8. Historian Harold Cruse's analysis of the history of integration as a social philosophy suggests that American society has reached its allowable "saturation point" for racial integration. If this is true, what are the implications for potential success or failure of society's racial policy, which is still for the most part based on the premise of integration?

9. Harold Cruse raises the question, "Is full racial integration really necessary in the interests of racial democracy?" Is integration the best strategy for those who would seek true justice among all races and classes in society? What are the rationales for seeking other directions, and what are the implications for social, political, and economic policy of choosing a non-assimilationist approach?

10. Within an integrationist approach, individual people of color often have been compelled to relate to groups or institutions that are predominantly white. Would an approach that matches institution with institution, as well as individual with individual, allow for a more balanced and healthy opportunity for honest relationship? If so, how will institutions of color be maintained or developed so as to feel like equal partners?

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BODY, BLOOD, *and* SPIRIT

▲ AMERICAN INDIANS IN 1992 PROCLAIM again, and boldly, that theirs is a living culture that has survived despite the genocidal designs of the more recent immigrants to these shores. Five hundred years after the arrival of Europeans, the rights of indigenous people on the North American continent continue to be under attack, but the people themselves continue to defy the odds by maintaining a culture and a worldview that have increasing impact on the dominant society.

The authors in this section provide the historical overview necessary to put the current realities of the American Indian community in perspective, while also addressing the issues facing the community today. With treaty rights, sovereignty issues, and religious practices under assault, the American Indian community is charting its way through rough waters, aware of the changes of the last 500 years and empowered by a story that endures.

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A HERITAGE DENIED

AMERICAN INDIANS STRUGGLE FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

by Carol Hampton

Almost 500 years ago Europeans came to our land, came to stay. Others had come before them to fish or for some other reason, incidentally bringing diseases to coastal peoples, wiping out whole communities along the Atlantic shore. But they had not stayed.

With the arrival of Columbus, history took another course. His appearance in our land set in motion a chain of events which led to destruction of native nations, usurpation of native land and its gifts, and slavery.

We helped those early explorers; we led them. We aided early conquerors, hoping they would rid us of our enemies. Always willing to learn, we listened to early missionaries...after they finally decided that we had souls.

We thought those early Europeans were like us. But we learned that similarities were shallow and often merely physical. We only dimly understood their purpose—and that understanding came too late. We thought they were like us. The newcomers greed—their need to plunder the Earth and steal its riches; to grasp all the gifts of the Western Hemisphere and take them back to sustain their own world; and to take native land for their own purposes—made them very different from those who greeted and welcomed them to their homeland.

As we little understood Europeans 500 years ago, today we still little understand European descendants who rationalize and justify actions of their ancestors by denying our very existence. Almost every year more scholars of European heritage write learned books postulating a smaller and smaller population of the Western Hemisphere prior to European arrival. Those who live their lives outside of academe cherish their secular saint—Christopher Columbus—because he "discovered America." It seems both groups yearn for an America existing from time immemorial, pristine and unpeopled, awaiting European "discovery."

Many of our closest "friends" ask us what harm such a yearning could cause. What hurt could come from innocent celebrations of Columbus Day? Indeed, what can such innocent thinking, feeling, and yearning mean to descendants of those hospitable people who shared their gifts from the Creator with newcomers? What does negation of our lives mean to us? Can this possibly be a form of racism? What is racism?

Some years ago, the National Council of Churches defined prejudice and racism this way:

Prejudice is a personal attitude towards other people based on a categorical judgement about their physical characteristics, such as race or ethnic origin....Racism is racial prejudice plus power. Racism is the intentional or unintentional use of power to isolate, separate, and exploit others. This use of power is based on a belief in superior racial origin, identity, or supposed racial characteristics. Racism confers certain privileges on and defends the dominant group, which in turn sustains and perpetuates racism....Institutional racism is one of the ways organizations and structures serve to preserve injustice.

THOSE VERY PEOPLE WHO WOULD DISAVOW THEIR RACISM WOULD OBSTRUCT AMERICAN INDIAN ACCESS TO SACRED SITES, TRIVIALIZE TRIBAL TRADITIONS AND CULTURES, AND REPUDIATE AMERICAN INDIAN EXISTENCE.

"I am not a racist! There are no blacks in my community—and only a few in the whole state!" This is a common comment heard in places such as South Dakota that have a large American Indian population. Such comments reflect a part of the difficulty in achieving racial justice for American Indians: Is racism only directed against African Americans? Is racism only a white-over-black issue?

Those very people who would disavow their racism would obstruct American Indian access to sacred sites, trivialize tribal traditions and cultures, interfere with tribal and intertribal religious practices, denounce tribal governments, assault American Indians in their homes and walking down urban streets, and, at the same time, repudiate American Indian existence. Such actions "isolate, separate, and exploit" American Indians.

This is racism, although the form it takes against American Indians may often appear different from that against African Americans. What forms, then, does racism against American Indians take?

I CANNOT SPEAK for all Indians. That would be presumptuous. As D'Arcy McKnickle wrote, "No Indian individual, even within his own family, speaks for another individual. No tribe presumes to speak for another tribe. To act otherwise is to act discourteously if not indecently."

I am a Caddo—and I am a woman. Together they make me who I am, and I can only speak out of that identity and a matriarchal heritage. That heritage allows me to offer you glimpses of racism against Indians.

In addition, my job is one of "listening" to other American Indians and Alaska Natives. My work takes me to all the Episcopal Church's missions and ministries with American Indians and Alaska Natives to learn from them what concerns them. It allows me to draw on experiences of others.

First, a personal experience: When I was in the 7th grade at a public school in Oklahoma City, I took a class in Oklahoma history—a class mandated by the state legislature for every public school student to complete. I was a good student and enjoyed school, and I looked forward to learning more about Oklahoma history.

Now you must understand that I came to the study of Oklahoma history with some knowledge. Both of my grandmothers had told me many stories about the past. Sometimes I was privileged to sit with them and listen to them exchange stories—each from her own side of the frontier, for one of my grandmothers was Caddo and the other was Irish and German. So, I knew something of the history of that place now called Oklahoma.

The first day or so my Oklahoma history teacher told us that Indians were a part of the history of Oklahoma, and I really got interested then. Of course, I knew that Indians were a part of the history of Oklahoma. My Caddo grandmother had told me many stories and she and all the other elders were living proof.

The teacher then told the class that there were five tribes in Oklahoma's history. That puzzled me because, besides Caddos, I knew Wichitas, Delawares, Kiowas, Cheyennes, Comanches, Apaches, and Arapahoes. But I was a good child and eager to learn so I listened to her identify the five tribes. They were the "Five Civilized Tribes"—Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole. Four "C"s and an "S" but not Caddo, not Comanche, not Cheyenne, nor any of the other tribes I knew. I learned something about educational institutions and the world that afternoon, but I did not learn historical truth.

Later I learned that my grandmother was more nearly right than my state-certified 7th grade teacher. There were indeed Indians in the history of what became the state of Oklahoma—but not just the so-called Five Civilized Tribes.

Museum of New Mexico

Navajo woman after 300-mile forced march from her homeland to Fort Sumner, New Mexico territory, in 1862.

Sixty-seven tribes became a part of the history of Oklahoma when the government forced most of them to Indian Territory during the 19th-century period of history known as "Indian Removal." Caddos, Wichitas, Osages, and occasionally Kiowas and Comanches had lived or hunted in the area which became the state of Oklahoma long before the arrival of those walking the "trails of tears."

That long-ago afternoon a 12-year-old Caddo girl learned that not only was she not civilized, but her tribe did not even exist. She began to learn the lesson that people in power view history only from their own perspective.

History is written by the conquerors, and they tell the story as they perceive it. I remember recognizing the truth spoken by a young woman serving with me on a

committee for social justice in higher education—truth not for those of us sitting in the room, but for the world: "I know you. I know all about you because you have taught me all about you. I attended your schools from the time I was 6 years old. Your teachers taught me well."

I would carry her words further. I know your history, your values, your thoughts, and your beliefs. You taught me that my history mattered not at all unless it impinged on yours and then you taught my history only from your perspective. You taught me that only your values were valid and that mine stood in the way of progress. You taught me that your beliefs were the only true way of believing and that mine were superstition. You taught me that only you think and I cannot.

You have sent your anthropologists to view my life and determine from my actions what my beliefs are. You taught me that your thoughts about the world and relationships between people and all of creation are classified as philosophy, but that I do not have a philosophy. You taught me that when you theorize about God that is theology, but that I do not have a theology. You taught me that I and my ancestors before me were savages, pagans, barriers to be removed from your path.

You continue to teach my children and grandchildren that they have inferior and inadequate minds. But you don't know me. You have never really wanted to know me. You never asked me what I thought, perhaps because you were too busy denying my existence as a human being. And that is another face of racism.

ONE OF THE FACES RACISM HAS presented to American Indians is a refusal to recognize our reality, and particularly our existence in the 20th century. Many people seem to think that American Indians disappeared at the end of the 19th century. Historians and government officials have told us that the frontier closed in 1890 and its symbol, the American Indian, vanished for all time. Certainly that was the stated goal both of the "pacification of the Plains," a euphemistic name for wars of extermination that followed the Civil War, and the "peace policy" that resulted from the failure of extermination policies.

Well-meaning people, many of them representing their churches, presented federal government agents with a policy of assimilation of American Indians. If they failed at annihilating us, they would obliterate us through making us in their image, albeit darker. As one of those good-hearted men said, "Kill the Indian and save the man."

If we were to survive, our tribal identities would cease to exist. These "friends" of ours looked at our reservations and saw what they referred to as poverty, filth, and pagan rituals. They failed to see the beauty, spirituality, generosity, and love of the land that marked our lives. Believing that they would "save" us, they took the land that sustained us.

That policy lasted for about 50 years before the federal government and our so-called "friends" abandoned it. In the meantime government policy had banned our political structures, forced our ceremonies to be held in hidden places, renamed us Christian names, and taken many of our reserved lands from us through a process of allotment. The stated purpose of the government was eradication of the Indian race.

A hundred years later in the 1980s, American Indians, surviving still, continue in their quest to protect their racial identity. Now that Indians have little land remaining to them, the focus of the battle has shifted to rights reserved through treaties which had ceded tribal land.

HISTORICALLY, U.S. POLICY HAS VACILLATED BETWEEN ASSIMILATION OF AMERICAN INDIAN PEOPLE—WITH ITS CONSEQUENT REPUDIATION OF TRIBAL IDENTITY AND AUTHORITY—AND EXTERMINATION.

U.S. congressional representatives regularly introduce bills to abrogate treaties with American Indian tribes so that they can seize the remaining few acres and confiscate health and educational services and water, hunting, and fishing rights that Indians have retained in exchange for ceded land (see "A Legacy of Broken Promises," p. 32).

Tribes constantly battle against federal, state, and county governments and private associations to retain their tribal sovereignty, identity, and integrity. Historically, U.S. policy has vacillated between assimilation of American Indian people—with its consequent repudiation of tribal identity and authority—and extermination.

In the late 20th century, separation and recognition of tribal sovereignty has become the current government rhetoric, recognizing tribal identity and self-determination. Observers note, however, similarities between current policy and the policy of "termination," so-called because it terminated treaty rights and special government-to-government relationships between tribes and the federal government during the 1950s.

"Self-determination," "termination," or "assimilation" all would abrogate treaty rights by denying the existence of American Indian tribes or people. Whatever language federal policy makers use, all three policies result in cultural genocide. That, too, describes one of the faces of racism.

WHILE INDIANS FIGHT TO RETAIN tribal sovereignty and treaty rights, they also must confront attacks against their religions. Recently Indians have lost almost every religious freedom court case. Courts have denied Indians rights of access to sacred sites while protecting rights of hikers and skiers to trails, platforms, and lifts in areas of spiritual renewal rituals. The Northwest Indian Cemetery Protective Association lost the fight to prevent the construction of a logging road through Indian burial grounds, land obviously sacred to them.

Indians, and perhaps all religious people, lost a significant case in a 1990 decision of the Supreme Court of the United States. Oregon state law had prohibited peyote use even in the religious ceremonies of members of the Native American Church, arguing that it had to protect its citizens from harmful drug use.

Ceremonial use of peyote by Indians predates the arrival of Columbus. A cactus growing primarily in the

southwest and Mexico, it contains at least 15 interactive alkaloids, some of which may create visions when ingested. Native American Church members affirm that peyote enables believers to communicate with God through these visions and thus is essential to the practice of their religion.

Church members had hoped the courts would exempt them from Oregon state law as other states had done. The Supreme Court, however, held that Oregon state law in no way infringed upon constitutional rights of freedom of religion. Rather the interference with religious practices was considered simply an incidental effect of the law. Now, as for the past 500 years, American Indians await non-Indian respect for their customs, traditions, and religions.

In September 1990, Latin American commissioners of the Program to Combat Racism of the World Council of Churches called together 125 indigenous and African-American people from throughout the Americas and the Caribbean to meet in Rio de Janeiro to discuss challenges presented by physical and cultural genocide in relation to the upcoming quincentennial of Columbus' arrival. Hoping to find a common vision, participants tried to set aside long-held animosities and unite to liberate themselves from the prospect of another 500 years of racial injustice, oppression, and exploitation.

In a statement prepared during the conference, participants declared:

These 500 years of oppression and exploitation must never be celebrated!...We denounce European claims of "discovery" in our lands and seas. We equally reject their description of the invasion as an "encounter of cultures and nations." We call the 1492 activities for what they were: invasion; aggression; labor exploitation; disruption of our traditions; violation of our religious beliefs and practices; blatant land-grabbing. We denounce the legacy of exploitation for its disruption and destruction of lands, seas, and peoples and for its devastating consequences on animal and plant species and all of creation.

The document also spoke of hope and commitment by indigenous and black peoples: "All injustices should and can be reversed and we, the suffering people, are key to the reversal. Together, African Americans and indigenous peoples must work to rescue our spirituality, religions, traditions, cultures, and practices." The document affirmed "that 1992 should be a time of repentance and reparation by churches for their past sins against indigenous and African-American peoples."

1992! WE OFTEN DOUBT THAT people in American and European churches and societies will reflect on realities of 500 years of colonization and exploitation, and will confess and repent their actions and those of their ancestors, as asked in a recent National Council of Churches resolution. We despair that 1992 or any year will bring racial justice to American Indians. We wonder if racial justice is even possible.

Can reconciliation happen without racial justice or while one group still maintains that past sins and transgressions happened long ago and have no place in the world of today? The state of South Dakota has announced a year of reconciliation, and yet, during that year an elected official made the following statement during a city council meeting: "The Native American culture as we know it now, not as it formerly existed, is a culture of hopelessness, Godlessness, of joblessness and lawlessness."

Indians protested! Too often the "only good Indian is a dead Indian." Perhaps for this official, Native American culture is fine as long as we remember it from a past century, once again ignoring our 20th-century existence and the major problems of joblessness and poverty. Even with these problems rarely has that culture given up all hope or our belief in God.

There is hope. A young man of American Indian heritage said to me: "Imagine growing up an American Indian halfbreed with the blood of Caddo, Choctaw, and Chickasaw tribes in you....

"Imagine growing up...knowing that you belong to a culture long native to this land before the white man 'discovered' it. Imagine trying to assert your identity when the majority of society affirms that 'Indians are a dead race.' Imagine constantly dealing with people who try their hardest to convince you that you are not an Indian. Imagine.

"America. 'Land of the free and the brave.' Land where all should be free. Land where American Indians have been and will be consistently assaulted by others, if not with guns, then with alcohol, money, technology, or simply words. With words of dismissal, the politicians wipe out the tribes' meaning and deface them of their honor. With words, they strip American Indians of race, culture, philosophy, reason. With words they cover the Indians with a gloss of alienation and meaninglessness, leaving them hollowed-out entities, repeating over and over the rules of a society that was never their own.

"This fight for identity is an enormous undertaking. To strive to keep one's heritage in the face of imminent annihilation nears impossibility, but it is not impossible."

Every time people in powerful positions tell us we no longer exist as a people, a race, we are reminded that we have far to go down the good road toward racial justice. When our "friends" regard us as curiosities; comment on our clothes instead of our words and thoughts; interpret our ceremonials instead of accepting our religious knowledge; realize something lacking in their own spirituality and take and trivialize ours; and when they try to assimilate us into their culture by destroying our identity, thereby depriving us of opportunities to offer our gifts to church and society, then we wonder if we will ever realize our dream of racial justice.

But as the young man indicated, we are survivors—500 years of attempted physical and cultural genocide has proven that. ■

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WITH DRUM AND CUP

WHITE MYTHS AND INDIAN SPIRITUALITY

An interview with George Tinker.

He is, as he describes it, of mixed blood: "Osage is my tribe of enrollment on my father's side; my mother was a Lutheran." These days both lines of his heritage interact to define just who he is.

In the mid-1970s, George Tinker spent several years in Berkeley, California, first studying for ordination at Pacific Lutheran Seminary and then for a doctorate in Bible at Graduate Theological Union. While in the Bay area, which has the largest concentration of American Indians in the United States, Tinker organized a ministry to work as an agent of healing with Native American people in San Francisco, Oakland, and San Jose.

Tinker believes that the church, which has historically been part of the oppressive authority over the Indian community, must participate in healing—"self-healing"—with Indian people. After years of organizing at the local level, Tinker made the difficult transition into the academic world by accepting a position at Iliff School of Theology in Denver teaching multicultural ministries. As associate pastor of Living Waters, a joint Episcopal-Lutheran parish, he brings together his faith and heritage into a common tapestry, and at Iliff he shares that vision with a new generation of pastors-to-be.

George Tinker was interviewed by Bob Hulteen at the *Sojourners* magazine office in Washington, D.C., while he was in town to participate in planning an alternative response to the 500th anniversary of Columbus' arrival. He discusses the need to address historical inaccuracies in American mythology, the seductive allure of assimilation for Indian people, the appropriate response for the church in reconciliation, and the effects of New Age spirituality on Native Americans.

—The Editors

Sojourners: You are here planning for what will be the "celebration of Columbus' discovery of America" 500 years ago. You have said about the anniversary that white people should be thinking differently, that we misunderstand the event. How would you say it should be characterized?

George Tinker: I think the whole notion of celebrating Columbus Day is part of the American foundational mythology. It is an illusion that people on this continent live with. My argument would be that living that illusion is not healthy for white Americans, that it is in fact living a lie.

You have to understand that from an American Indian perspective, celebrating the Columbus quincentenary is in fact celebrating Indian genocide. Indian people like to remind white Americans that the only thing Columbus discovered was that he was lost. About half a world lost.

Actually Columbus didn't even discover that he was lost. He died thinking that he had found Asia.

Another example of that mythology is the myth that George Armstrong Custer was a general, when in fact he was a mere lieutenant colonel, and not a very bright one at that. People believe he died a heroic death in a massacre, when in fact it was not a massacre. It was a fair fight in which Custer pulled off a surprise attack on the Indians. It just turns out that the Indians were stronger.

The mythology of Columbus begins with the notion that he was a scientific adventurer who was trying to prove that the Earth was round. But flat-Earth notions were only held at the uneducated popular level in Europe. The academicians all knew the world was round. In fact, notions of a round Earth go back to Greek philosophy in the West. Many American Indian tribes already knew that the world was round.

So for more than half a century before Columbus sailed, people had been playing with the notion of making that trip; they had plotted it and planned it. The only question was, How long before you landed? There was no notion of falling off the Earth.

Another aspect of the Columbus mythology that needs to be shattered is that he was an esoteric scientist trying to make a point. In fact, that voyage was engaged in for one purpose only—to become wealthy. Columbus

expected to become wealthy. He had promised his bankers, and the King and Queen of Spain, Isabel and Ferdinand, that they would become more wealthy. And in the long run they did exactly that.

The other side of it for Indians is the result of Columbus' misadventures: 10 years after Columbus' arrival on the island of San Salvador, the entire population, estimated to be 100,000 people, perished. Within 30 years, nearly the entire population on the island of Hispaniola perished. Bartolome de Las Casas [famous 16th-century priest and historian] says there were three million people on Hispaniola alone.

Judy Diers

Within 58 years—by mid-century in the 1500s—the population of Mexico was reduced by 80 percent, from 25 million to five million. That's the kind of genocide we are talking about.

For American Indian people, it's not a matter of being anti-Hispanic or anti-Italian. But Columbus becomes the symbol of the continuing genocide of Indian people, because of what happened in the Caribbean, and then in Mexico, and then in South America.

It happened under the aegis of the British in Virginia and the English Puritans in the Northeast. And it has simply continued, usually with some pretense of wanting to take care of the Indians, civilize them, Christianize them. That's especially true when people want to deprive Indians of their land.

Part of the problem today is that Indians are such a small minority of the population on this continent. What may have been 25, or 30, or even 40 million people in 1492 has been reduced in the United States to one-and-a-half million. Unlike black people, who are a political factor because they approach 20 percent of the population, Indians are not a political factor.

Sojourners: There's a clear line through history, both here in the United States and in countries around the world, of the ongoing genocide of indigenous people. Is there any multinational effort to bring together the peoples who are being killed, primarily at the hands of historically European people?

Tinker: For centuries, Indians in the jungles of Peru, Brazil, and other Central and South American countries were left largely undisturbed, because the jungles were uninhabitable by the European immigrants and economically unfeasible. Now, as the population has grown and technologies have been developed to clear the jungle, Indians' lands are being taken away from them.

We in North America seem to have an ecological interest in saving the rain forests. But we are also complicitous in causing their demise, because we control the economic system that has generated such a horrendous Third World debt that the Third World countries can only satisfy the debt by using up the resources they have. One way of doing that is clearing rain forests and creating cattle ranges to provide Burger King and McDonalds with ground beef.

What happens to the people living in these areas when such change occurs? The reports we get, repeatedly, continually these days, especially from Brazil, state that Indians are simply being massacred in order to deprive them of their land. They are being massacred by private armies of entrepreneurs and big ranchers who are laying claim to the land, homesteading it.

A number of Indian organizations are struggling to make their voices heard. I suppose that's the hope for the future—some sort of coalition among "Fourth World" peoples around the globe, including aboriginal Australians and Pacific Islanders. The Maouris in the Pacific are particularly strong on some of these issues. Indigenous people include many Africans, many Asians, and many oppressed groups in India.

Sojourners: What would you say to the environmental movement that focuses its attention on the rain forests,

with little concern for the people whose entire subsistence is being destroyed? Is there a difference between the ecological concern and the justice concern?

Tinker: At one level you'll find Indian people in general support of the environmental movement for religious and theological reasons, not just for survival reasons. To treat the Earth with respect is an Indian way of existing.

On the other hand, the justice concerns of people, and not just Indian people but all people, have to exceed issues of peace and ecology. The World Council of Churches, since Nairobi in 1975, has consistently talked of justice and peace, not peace and justice. Justice must precede peace.

The WCC tried to get it right with "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation." Some of us think they were just playing pin the tail on the donkey and that maybe there's a religious concern, a spiritual concern, for creation that needs to come first as the foundation for justice. But that is not solely an ecological concern.

There's been criticism from a lot of poor people—marginalized people—that the ecology movement has detracted from justice issues. I think that's a legitimate concern.

Sojourners: Could you say a little more about the importance of the land and the sense of creation preceding justice? It is very hard for most white Americans to comprehend an Indian's perspective on land and its ownership.

Tinker: Indian people look at the land as generative. It is where we come from. It's not something we possess or own. Land ownership is a Western European philosophical notion that's become rooted in political and economic systems.

When the Europeans first came to this country, they created legal and theological fictions that allowed them to take over Indian land. They said the Indians didn't really occupy the land, because they just roamed the land. Doctrines of vacant dominion developed. And if Indians died in a plague, the Puritans considered it an act of God to open it up to them because then there weren't enough Indians to occupy it.

There were consistent efforts in the 19th century to teach Indians private ownership of property because it was considered the civilized way of existing. Of course, what it did was destroy the structure of Indian society and culture and meant that Indians were reduced to levels of existence that forced codependent relationships upon the U.S. government.

As Indians were no longer able to take care of themselves, they had to rely on government subsidies and handouts. That codependency continues to this day—in the relationship of Indian people to the church as well as to U.S. government agencies such as Bureau of Indian Affairs and Indian Health Service.

Indians believe that the Creator put them in a specific place and that is their place.To move to another place is a very hard thing to do, and people die when they move. The Osages did not thrive when we were moved out of Missouri and into Kansas. And when we were moved out of Kansas and into Oklahoma it became even worse. That's the story of many, many tribes that were relocated in Indian territory, where they had to learn to live in relationship to a new land.

The relationship to a land is not only a spiritual relationship; it's one of physical economy as well. You know the land; you know the sacred sites; you know the medicines, the herbs, the foods that grow there and where they grow.

When you are moved to a new place, you suddenly don't have access to those things anymore, so that many of your patterns for religious ceremonies and observances are broken. How can you have a ceremony if you don't have access to the various things of the land that you need to conduct that ceremony?

And I guess I should say straight out that the gospel was not liberating for Indian people but was a form of bondage. It's not the gospel that's not liberating, though; it's the proclamation of the gospel that puts Indians in bondage. Consistently the missionaries of the European churches in all of our denominations confused gospel with European culture. The gospel they proclaimed was the gospel of "civilization," of a "superior culture." Steven R. Riggs, a 19th-century Presbyterian missionary in South Dakota, literally called it the "gospel of soap."

One wonders if we have to give up our Old Testament in order to leap into the New Testament—the new covenant in Jesus. Yet Indian people were forced to disassociate themselves from their old ways—from their religion and their culture.

In order to do that, they have to engage in an act of self-hatred and self-denial. They have to look at what they were and say, "All of that was evil." The Puritans said it straight forwardly: "The Indians are the legions of Satan."

Sojourners: Are they still doing that today?

Tinker: Of course. I think there are white missionaries who are trying to be much more sensitive. And some are extremely good and extremely faithful. But we have two problems. One is that we have a lot of white missionaries in all of our denominations who buy into that colonial mentality and are about the business of whipping Indians into shape culturally. It happens.

The other problem is that the institutional structures of church, just like the institutional structures of government, continue to impose themselves on Indian people. It may be on a subconscious level, but they nevertheless forcefully, powerfully, require a cultural shift toward assimilation. I suspect that most people in our North American churches believe in their heart of hearts that the solution to the "Indian problem" is assimilation.

Sojourners: And they become so angry when efforts toward assimilation aren't welcomed. They condemn Indians' desire for self-sufficiency, and they do it in pious language.

Tinker: That's right. It's, "How dare you Indians be that way when we offered you what we never offered black people, in order to make you white?"

You see, white America wants change to happen on its own terms. White people want reconciliation. They can't understand that their insistence on reconciliation is an insistence that it happen on their terms.

My colleague [at Iliff] Vincent Harding has an interesting analogy. He's a black historian of enormous repute. He says that for years white America was busy building this house, and then had people from different cultural groups living in the yards or the shanties around the house.

The liberal contribution since the civil rights activity of the '60s has been to say, "We have to open our house and invite these people to come in and stay." But the problem, as Vincent says, is, "It's still their house. We're still guests." We need to think about building a new house where everybody gets equal say in its design and has equal ownership. Then we need to tear that old house down.

Sojourners: Liberation theology as it's been given to us by Central Americans, South Africans, and others has helped people who are oppressed to find their place in the gospel story. You are a New Testament scholar. Do American Indian people find themselves in the Bible story?

Brian Jaudon

FROM AN AMERICAN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE, CELEBRATING THE COLUMBUS QUINCENTENARY IS IN FACT CELEBRATING INDIAN GENOCIDE.

Tinker: I think the gospel can speak forcefully to Indian people. There's no doubt about that. But I think Indian people have to be free finally to determine what the gospel is themselves instead of being told what the gospel is.

The problem is that too many missionaries seem to be under the impression that Indian people are incapable of having a spiritual thought without pastoral coaching. I think liberation theology can eventually have an impact on Indian people. It hasn't yet.

We haven't figured out liberation modes for interpreting the gospel. We are consumers of the denominational theologies of our churches, period. That's what has to change.

The problem with Latin American liberation theology, first of all, is that it is given over to Marxist thought. For American Indians that is wholly inadequate and inappropriate. It is replacing one Western philosophical economic system with another. Marxist thought does not pay attention to the realities of indigenous cultures. It can't. It is a social and political movement that lumps people together into some amorphous, cultural whole called "the people."

What's happened in Latin America is that Indian people have consistently been oppressed—and not only by Third World governments that are rightist, but by leftist governments as well. The Sandinista experiment came crashing down, according to *Pravda*—and I would tend to agree with their editorial assessment—because Daniel Ortega and the Sandinistas had alienated Indian people and lost the Indian vote.

I'm sure at some point the Sandinistas tried to correct the situation, but they were never able to. There was a consistent Indian resistance movement that was not contra. It rarely got written about in the American press. It was not anti-American particularly but it certainly wasn't pro-American either.

I'm talking about Brooklyn Rivera, the appointed leader of the Miskito Indians, who, by the way, was given a cabinet-level position in the Violeta Chamorro government. Well, it hasn't been reported in this country, because it ain't important, right?

Let me say one other thing about Marxism not fitting Indian people. Sometimes in the debate that goes on, one is led to believe that there are only two options—capitalism and Marxism. Indian people by and large would stand opposed to both because of their cultural, economic, and social impact on Indian people.

Indian people would far quicker say, "We should simply be allowed to have our own way of doing things." And since 1492 that has not been the case. Things have been imposed upon us by an outside, militarily superior force. And of course Europeans confuse military superiority with cultural superiority.

Sojourners: It seems to me that Indian people have much to evangelize white America about in terms of finding some of those things that white America has lost.

Tinker: I'd go a step further and say that Indian people may have an understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ that is more authentic than white Americans' understanding of the gospel.

It seems to me that much of the gospel has been interpreted throughout history by Europeans and Americans. Before long it is not the gospel that is being interpreted but an interpretation of the gospel. Some things become so commonplace that you can't think of understanding them differently.

The kingdom of God has consistently been understood in temporal terms by Europeans, primarily Lutheran New Testament scholars, beginning a century ago. The kingdom of God was dealt with as a question of when it is going to happen. The question of where it is was consistently disallowed. That's not at stake.

It's a question of eschatology: When will it happen? And you get all these jargonized responses of realized eschatology, actualized eschatology, imminent eschatology.

I would argue that the European intellectual tradition is fundamentally temporal, with spatial aspects being subordinate to this primary category of time. But Indian people are just the opposite. We're spatial, rooted in the land. And when we read about the kingdom of God, the first and only thought to come naturally to Indian people is, "Well, we don't know much about kings and kingdoms, but it must be someplace. It must be somewhere."

As Indian people we wrestle with that, and I've wrestled with it out loud with numerous Indian groups and Indian people: The kingdom of God has got to be right here. In other words, it becomes a metaphor for

creation.

Jesus' call to repent, to return to the kingdom, is a call to come into a proper relationship with the rest of creation, and with the Creator. A proper relationship recognizes that I am simply a part of the creation, one of God's creatures along with the other two-leggeds, the four-leggeds, the wingeds, and the other living, moving things—including the trees, the grass, the rocks, the mountains.

All those things are relative. That's the universal Indian notion of the interrelationship of all things in creation. Human beings are a part of creation—not apart from it and somehow free to use it up or abuse it.

This is a whole different slant on the kingdom of God and, immediately and implicitly, on the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sojourners: The New Age movement claims to have adopted what its leaders say is a native spirituality or outlook on creation. How do you feel about that?

Tinker: I think it is misguided, for a number of reasons. One is that there is a great romanticizing of Indian people and Indian spirituality.

There is also a great dearth of spiritual rootedness in white America, so people are really searching. And that's real, that's legitimate. But they're searching in the wrong places. They are searching to appropriate somebody else's spirituality instead of working within their own culture to uncover what is there.

When people come to the Indian world and try to appropriate Indian spirituality in that New Age fashion, a number of things happen. People such as Lynn Andrews [author of *Medicine Woman* and *Crystal Woman: The Sisters of the Dream Time*] make a lot of money at it. They also make up information.

We now know from public press revelations, for instance, that Lynn Andrews never was in conversation with Indian women elders in Canada. The whole thing was a fabrication. But it's worth $10,000 per lecture. Real Indian spiritual leaders don't earn that kind of money.

New Age thinking quite often is economically motivated. A lot of New Age people out there are ripping off Indian things and making money at it.

For some people it is just a way of enhancing their own private spirituality. In fact, for most New Agers, Native American beliefs provide a way of enhancing private spirituality. That is as unIndian as you can get.

White people come out to dance a sun dance in order to accumulate some sense of spiritual self-worth, when in fact one doesn't dance the sun dance for that reason. We dance the sun dance so that the people in that place might live. Why would somebody drive all the way from Texas to South Dakota to dance the sun dance so that the people in Rosebud might live? Well, they don't. They drive that far to prove themselves.

And in the process those lies creep into Indian thinking. I find it horribly destructive of Indian people for whites to be involved in Indian things that are that intense, that private, that intimate.

I don't think that Indian people ought to try to make Indians out of white Americans. We can model our spirituality in ways that enable our white brothers and sisters to reclaim their own spirituality. That is part of evangelism because, you see, there is no doubt in the Indian mind that white Americans are brothers and sisters, relatives, just as much as the others of the four nations of the Earth—the black nation, the red nation, the yellow nation, and the white nation.

The white American church needs to hear this, especially since it has been a part of the problem, not the solution. In my opinion, part of the churches' own spiritual need is to engage in acts of confession and repentance, of reconciliation and healing.

But still I draw inspiration and energy from my church more than anything else, and from the people. I am the associate pastor of an Indian church in a very poor community. My church is a community of people who are really struggling to affirm both their commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ and their Indianness at the level of culture, ideas, spirituality. We are struggling to understand the gospel from an Indian perspective.

It's very clear that we will no longer have an interpretation of the gospel imposed on us by anyone. We will even resist having the structure of the congregation imposed on us by judicatory authorities.

We've tried to say consistently, "No, we'll decide what we ought to be doing, and what will be healing to the Indian community." The vision is one of healing and wholeness for the Indian community, so that my congregation is extremely active in the urban Indian community, and many are active still in their connections back home on the reservation.

When we are together in prayer several things happen. First of all, we bring our Indian identity into the liturgy. Second, we show respect always to the traditional religion of our tribes, to the traditional spiritual leaders; and in conversation with them we have brought some of that with us into our liturgy. We might quite naturally have a medicine man in church on Sunday, and we would have that medicine man pray for us. Usually those people would also come to Communion.

Third, we affirm our Indian identity and we bring those things from the tradition into our service. We use a drum and we sing traditional ceremony songs, prayer songs, not Christian, as the proper preface to our Holy Communion.

When we celebrate Communion, our people are very, very clear that Christ is present on the altar. More clear I think than white Episcopal and Lutheran churches. The power of Christ is present in body and blood and spirit.

The fourth item is that our people speak for themselves. They don't need pastoral leadership to tell them what it is they are about.

When we go to conferences, Indian ministry conferences, it is invariably the case that as we go around the room it is the pastor or ministry director who gets up to report. When it comes around to Living Waters, somebody will reach over and touch me on the shoulder and say, "It's all right, we'll take care of it."

Last summer we had eight people in the congregation who danced in four different sun dances. Of course the missionaries have said all along that those ceremonies are pagan and we can't do that. Our people insist that they are free in the gospel, free in Christ Jesus, to participate in Indian religious forms and ceremonies. We intend to live in that freedom. ■

'FOR ALL MY RELATIONS'

JUSTICE, PEACE, AND THE INTEGRITY OF CHRISTMAS TREES

by George Tinker

Heavily dressed for the half-meter of snow covering the hillside, a small group of people stood quietly around what looked like a perfect, if rather large, Christmas tree. Mostly American Indians from a variety of tribes and all members of an Indian congregation, the people were speaking prayers on behalf of the tree.

It could have been most any annual congregational outing to harvest a Christmas tree for their church, except that these prayers were a thorough mixture of Christian prayers and traditional Indian tribal prayers. Some of the people were actually speaking to the tree, speaking words of consolation, apology, purpose, and promise. The two pastors held tobacco in their hands, ready to offer it back to the Creator, to offer it for the life of this tree, to offer it to the four directions, above and below, to offer it in order to maintain the harmony and balance of creation even in the perpetration of an act of violence.

There is a real sense of cultural value being exposed in this gathering. There is here an attitude toward creation and all the createds that sets American Indians apart from other Americans and most Europeans. Yet it is rather characteristic of a great many of the world's indigenous peoples and represents a set of cultural values that perseveres even in those indigenous communities that have been converted to Christianity.

Perhaps an outsider would describe the attitude of these Indians as one of awe or wonderment. We American Indians think of it as neither, but would prefer to call it respect—the appropriate attitude of respect necessary to fulfill our responsibility as part of the created whole, necessary to help maintain the harmony and balance, the interdependence and interrelationship of all things in our world.

Even more important is the underlying notion of reciprocity. The prayers and the offering of tobacco are reciprocal acts of giving something back to the Earth and to all of creation in order to maintain balance even as we disrupt the balance by cutting down this tree.

The question Indian cultures pose for Christian peoples, especially those of Europe and North America, is this: How can respect for a tree or rock, animals or eventually other human beings find any place in the industrial-commercial world that has emerged out of modernity and now threatens all of creation with "post-modern" extinction? And what sort of reciprocity do we engage in, will we engage in? What do we return to the Earth when we clear cut a forest or strip mine, leaving miles upon miles of earth totally bare?

Perhaps more painfully, the same question can be put in terms of human justice: Where is the reciprocity, the maintaining of cosmic balance, with respect to those who are suffering varieties of oppression in our modern world—blacks in southern Africa, non-Jews in Palestine, Tamils in Sri Lanka, or tribal peoples in Latin America?

John Spragens Jr.

Like many other Third and Fourth World peoples, I too have worried that the growing concern for and awareness of the ecological crisis facing all of creation might and often has distracted people of genuine conscience from their awareness of and commitment to issues of justice and liberation. The concern for the survival of fish in mountain lakes polluted by acid rain, for instance, is surely noble. However, when that concern distracts our attention from the daily suffering of blacks in southern Africa, it becomes an actual participant in the oppression imposed on those human sisters and brothers by the terror of apartheid.

For my part, I must constantly remind good Christian people in North America of the continued oppression of American Indians: our 60 percent unemployment rate; the destruction of our cultures; the theft of our lands; and our greater victimization by disease and dysfunctuality resulting in a horrible longevity statistic of only 46 years. The need for justice, for churches that proclaim the "good news to the poor and oppressed," is indeed real, even in the midst of North America's wealth.

Nevertheless, I want to argue that respect for creation must be our starting point for theological reflection in our endangered world. More explicitly, the American Indian perspective is that justice and peace will flow as a natural result of genuine and appropriate concern for creation.

At a theological level, the sequence of words in the World Council of Churches' program Justice, Peace, and

the Integrity of Creation is problematic for Native Americans, and I expect for other Fourth World indigenous peoples. And the "integrity of creation" must be understood as much more than a concern for ecological disintegration. It may be that the inherent spirituality of American Indians, Pacific Islanders, tribal Africans, and other indigenous peoples may help point us in the right direction.

NOT ONLY DO INDIANS CONTINUE TO TELL THE STORIES, SING THE SONGS, SPEAK THE PRAYERS, AND PERFORM THE CEREMONIES THAT ROOT THEMSELVES DEEPLY IN MOTHER EARTH, THEY ARE ACTUALLY AUDACIOUS ENOUGH TO THINK THAT THEIR STORIES AND THEIR WAYS WILL SOME DAY WIN OVER THE IMMIGRANTS AND TRANSFORM THEM.

AMERICAN Indians and other indigenous peoples have a long-standing confidence that they have much to teach Europeans and North Americans about the world and human relationships in the world. They are confident in the spiritual foundations of their insights, confident that those foundations can become a source of healing and reconciliation for all creation. A couple of simple examples come from an Indian perspective.

My Indian ancestors had a relationship with God as Creator that was healthy and responsible long before they knew of or confessed the gospel of Jesus Christ. This relationship began with the recognition of the Other as Creator, the creative force behind all things that exist, and long predated the coming of the missionaries.

In all that they did, our Indian ancestors acknowledged the goodness of the Creator and of all creation, including themselves. That was the point of the stories, the focus of their prayers, and the purpose of the ceremonies. They recognized the balance and harmony that characterized all of the created universe: Winter and summer were held in balance with one another. So also were hunting and planting, sky and earth, hot and cold, sun and moon, female and male, women and men. Our ancestors recognized all this as good, just as God does at the end of the sixth day (Genesis 1:31).

All American Indian spiritual insight, hence Indian theology, begins with creation, and this is reflected in the basic liturgical posture of Indians in many North American tribes. Our prayers are most often said with the community assembled into some form of circle. In fact, the circle is a key symbol for self-understanding in these tribes, representing the whole of the universe and our part in it.

We see ourselves as co-equal participants in the circle, standing neither above nor below anything else in God's creation. There is no hierarchy in our cultural context, even of species, because the circle has no beginning or ending. All the createds participate together, each in their own way, to preserve the wholeness of the circle.

When a group of Indians form a circle to pray, all know that the prayers have already begun with the representation of a circle. No words have yet been spoken and in some ceremonies no words need be spoken, but the intentional physicality of our formation has already expressed our prayer and deep concern for the wholeness of all of God's creation.

The Lakota and Dakota peoples have a phrase used in all their prayers that aptly illustrates the Native American sense of the centrality of creation. The phrase, *Mitakuye oyasin*, "For all my relations," functions somewhat like the word "Amen" in European and American Christianity. As such, it is used to end every prayer, and often it is in itself a whole prayer, being the only phrase spoken.

Like most native symbols, *Mitakuye oyasin* is polyvalent in its meaning. Certainly, one is praying for one's close kin—aunts, cousins, children, grandparents. And "relations" can be understood as tribal members or even all Indian people.

At the same time, the phrase includes all human beings, all two-leggeds as relatives of one another, and the ever-expanding circle does not stop there. Every Lakota who prays this prayer knows that our relatives necessarily include the four-leggeds, the wingeds, and all the living-moving things on Mother Earth. One Lakota teacher has suggested that a better translation of *Mitakuye oyasin* would read: "For all the above-me and below-me and around-me things: That is for all my relations."

These examples illustrate the extensive image of interrelatedness and interdependence—symbolized by the circle—and the importance of reciprocity and respect for one another for maintaining the wholeness of the circle. The American Indian concern for starting theology with creation is a need to acknowledge the goodness and inherent worth of all of God's creatures. We experience evil or sin as disruptions in that delicate balance, disruptions that negate the intrinsic worth of any of our relatives.

WE NEED TO COME TO A NEW (or perhaps very old) understanding of creation, one that begins to image creation as an ongoing eschatological act and not just God's initiatory act. We must begin to see creation as the eschatological basis even for the Christ event.

If this is difficult, it may be because the cultures in which the gospel has come to find a home in the West are so fundamentally oriented toward temporality and so disoriented toward spatiality. This characterizes our theologies and especially our interpretation of key biblical themes and texts.

It seems obvious enough that spatial categories do not necessarily exclude the temporal, nor vice versa. The possibility of spatial priority in language for the kingdom of God becomes pronounced in any Native American reading of scripture, however, because the Indian world is as decidedly spatial in its orientation as the modern Western world is temporal. In fact any Indian reader of Mark or the synoptic gospels is bound to think first of all in terms of the question "Where?" with regard to the kingdom.

The image seems to represent a symbolic value, and

the parameters of the symbol might be filled in as follows. First, the gospels seem to view the divine hegemony as something that is in process. It is drawing near or emerging (Mark 1:15). Yet it is also "among us" or in our midst (Luke 17:21). It is something that can be experienced by the faithful here and now, even if only proleptically. Its full emergence is still in the future. Second, the symbolic value captured by the imagery in no small part includes a view of an ideal world. And third, the structural definition of that ideal world is, above all else, relational.

I am convinced that the imagery of divine rule is essentially creation imagery, that the ideal world symbolically represented in the image builds on the divine origin of the cosmos as an ideal past and an ideal future. It is relational, first of all, because it implies a relationship between the created order of things and its Creator, and second because it implies a relationship between all of the things created by the Creator.

Human beings may have been created as the last of all the created (Genesis 1), or perhaps a human being was created first (Genesis 2). That is really inconsequential to this point. What is at stake is that the harmony and balance of the created order was good. While that order has been somewhat shaken by the human createds, it is still the ideal state to which we all look forward in Christ Jesus. The process is going on now, and all of creation is a part of the process.

An understanding of the imperative "Repent!" in Mark 1:15 is also important to the concept of the kingdom of God. The underlying Aramaic sense of "return" for *metanoia* is more helpful than the Greek notion of "change of mind." Repentance is key to the establishment of divine hegemony because it involves a "return," namely a return to God. Feeling sorry for one's sins is not a part of repentance at all, though it may be the initial act of confession.

Even in the most "Greek" of the gospel writers, in Luke's Acts of the Apostles, repentance is not a penitential emotion but instead carries the Hebrew sense of return. In Acts 2:37, people feel penitential emotion as a result of Peter's sermon and come to him to ask what they must do. His response is to say, "Repent and be baptized."

They already feel sorry for their sins. That's not what he requires of them. The Hebrew notion of repentance really is calling on God's people to recognize the divine hegemony, to return to God, to return to the ideal relationship between Creator and the created.

The establishment of any ecclesiastical structure should, then, be an attempt to actualize as much as possible (proleptically) this ideal. A church is an attempt on the part of a community of believers to respond to God's call to relationship, first to relationship with God as Creator, and second with one another as createds. A church is a response to Jesus' vision of an ideal world characterized by love of God and love of one's neighbor as oneself.

But this ideal world can only be actualized through repentance, that is, by "returning" to God as Creator and rightful sovereign of all creation. Hence church is a vehicle of repentance or "return." Moreover, this ideal world which exists only within the divine hegemony is "good"; it is marked by divine balance and harmony.

THE THEOLOGICAL IMAGINATION of Native Americans, rooted as it is in the dynamic, generating power of creation, can help show new direction for the trinitarian theology of our churches. If we begin with an affirmation of God as Creator and ourselves as created, then perhaps a spiritual transformation is possible that can bring us all closer to recognizing the kingdom of God in our midst. Perhaps we can acknowledge our humanness in new and more significant ways, understanding that confession precedes return, and that both become the basis for living in harmony and balance with God and all creation.

Besides confessing our individual humanness, this means confessing the humanness of our churches, our theologies, and the world economic order in which we participate. Then it is possible to make our repentance, to return, to go back from whence we came, that is, to go back to the Creator in whom we, like all of creation, "live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). We must go back to a proper relationship with the Creator, confessing our human inclination to put ourselves in Creator's place, renewing our understanding of ourselves and our institutions as mere creatures. We must go back to a recognition of ourselves as a part of and integrally related to all of creation.

The Indian understanding of creation as sacred, of Mother Earth as the source of all life, goes far beyond the notion of such Western counterinstitutions as Sierra Club or Greenpeace. It embraces far more than concern for harp seals or a couple of ice-bound whales. It embraces all of life, from trees and rocks to international relations. And this knowledge informs all of the community's activity, from hunting to dancing and even to writing grant proposals or administering government agencies.

It especially concerns itself with the way we all live together. Perforce, it has to do with issues of justice and fairness, and ultimately with peace.

Indian peoples have experienced and continue to experience endless oppression as a result of what some would call the barbaric invasion of America. And we certainly suspect that the oppression we have experienced is intimately linked to the way the immigrants pray and how they understand creation and their relationship to creation and Creator.

Moreover, we suspect that the greed which motivated the displacement of all indigenous peoples from their lands of spiritual rootedness is the same greed that threatens the destiny of the Earth and causes the continued oppression of so many peoples. Whether it is the stories the immigrants tell or the theologies they develop to interpret those stories, something appears wrong to Indian people.

But not only do Indians continue to tell the stories, sing the songs, speak the prayers, and perform the ceremonies that root themselves deeply in Mother Earth, they are actually audacious enough to think that their stories and their ways of reverencing creation will some day win over the immigrants and transform them. Optimism and enduring patience seem to run in the life blood of Native American peoples.

Mitakuye oyasin! For all my relatives! ■

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THE SWEETGRASS MEANING OF SOLIDARITY

500 YEARS OF RESISTANCE

by Robert Allen Warrior

Four hundred ninety-eight years and a few days after the invasion began, I light a stalk of sage and watch the fast way it burns. The burning sage glows red. A cloud of smoke burns my eyes, blurring my vision. Smoke enters my nostrils. The burning smell clears my head. For a moment, the blurring, burning cloud hides the other cloud. "The stink hiding the sun," Creek poet Joy Harjo calls it.

Under the sage cloud, I smell strength. I breathe clear, clean air. I touch five centuries of invisibility that refuses to vanish. Sage gives me power—for a moment. Then the cloud is gone and the other smell returns. My smudge pot is black from the ashes of the sage stalk now consumed.

I reach for a braid of sweetgrass, the medicine that does not light easily nor burn fast. The sweetgrass smell works slowly moving from my nostrils into my mind, arriving before announcing itself. In it, I see a wisp, not quite invisible. And I smell a different strength—a patient strength. The smell lingers amid other smells, 498 years and a few days after the invasion.

498 becomes 499, then 500. The U.S. Quincentenary Jubilee Commission is spending $80 million dollars to celebrate five centuries of attempted genocide and cultural imperialism. Countries around the world are celebrating five centuries in which Europeans first exploited native peoples' land and labor, then violated the dignity of humans around the globe, exploiting them as slaves, then cheap labor, to fuel arrogant greed.

The sage calls me to respond, to organize people to express indignation, to stand and say, "500 years and we are still here. We have never given up and never will!" The sage makes me want to tell others to organize protests, anything to disrupt this self-congratulatory party. Then I smell the sweetgrass and sense that other strength.

Its lingering smell reminds me that the celebration is one moment in a 500-year party that Indian people have hosted, a party for which Indian people and others have done all the work. That longer party will continue after the celebration is over. Sweetgrass patience tells me to balance my indignation with the kind of work that will give us all something to celebrate the next time one of these anniversaries comes along. When 1992 is over, what will we have done to bring an end to the longer party?

That is the question I smell when I burn sweetgrass. This 500th anniversary has been an opportunity for American Indian people from North, South, and Central America and the Caribbean to ask questions about our future, and it has been an opportunity to celebrate our survival and our resistance. It has been an opportunity for us to acknowledge that ours is not the only story of survival and resistance.

Amid talk of coalitions, movements, and solidarity, we have hoped that people will stand with us as the original people whose story is the beginning point of five centuries of resistance to oppression in these Americas, able to speak for ourselves and to articulate our own agenda for a just and peaceful future. Yet, we are always in danger of being nothing more than a symbolic presence—the "poster children" of 1992. As we make our plans and try to work together, sweetgrass is an invitation to reflect on what solidarity with American Indian people means in 1992 and beyond. But, I should warn you, sweetgrass demands patience.

DURING THE SUMMER OF 1990, I WAS ONE OF approximately 350 Indian people—including Yanomanis, Mapuches, Kunas, Quechuas, Caribs, Navajos, Hopis, Lummis, Lumbees, Osages, Inuits, Crees, and Seminoles—from North, South, and Central America and the Caribbean who met in Ecuador for the first ever intercontinental *encuentro* of American Indians. The theme was "500 Years of Indigenous Resistance."

Working commissions developed statements concerning human rights, self-determination, and land claims. We heard a lot of speeches, wrote a lot of statements and manifestoes, and drove a couple dozen translators to exhaustion. In our final statement, "The Declaration of Quito," we committed ourselves to international indig-

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enous solidarity in confronting the quincentenary.

Our coming together was a fulfillment of prophecy. The Runa people of Mexico believe that the indigenous people of the Americas were divided long ago into two groups—people of the Eagle (those from the North) and people of the Condor (those from the South). When the Eagle and the Condor rejoin their tears, the Runa story goes, a new era of life and spirit will begin for American Indian people.

We fulfilled the prophecy at dawn of the first morning when Rose Augér and Ed Burnstick, Cree people from North America, led us in a pipe ceremony. We gathered around a blazing fire in cold, mountain air. Some Peruvians offered coca leaves to the fire to symbolize our unity. Rose and Ed passed a lighted braid of sweetgrass to people who came forward to offer prayers.

The local press attended the ceremony and called it a pagan rite that invoked many gods. The Baptist owners of the campsite were more than a little dismayed that their name would be linked with something pagan. Conference organizers discussed discontinuing the ceremonies due to the negative reactions.

But, as Burnstick said, "We don't just decide on our own. Rose is guided by the grandfathers. I think we have to follow our spiritual leaders and be willing to come out and do the ceremonies for our people and for the conference." We continued the ceremonies and kept the fire burning until the meeting was over.

In Quito, and in a North American follow-up meeting over the Columbus Day 1990 holiday weekend in Minneapolis, we committed ourselves to two things. First, whatever else happens, we want 1992 primarily to be an opportunity to mobilize American Indian communities for long-range, constructive political action.

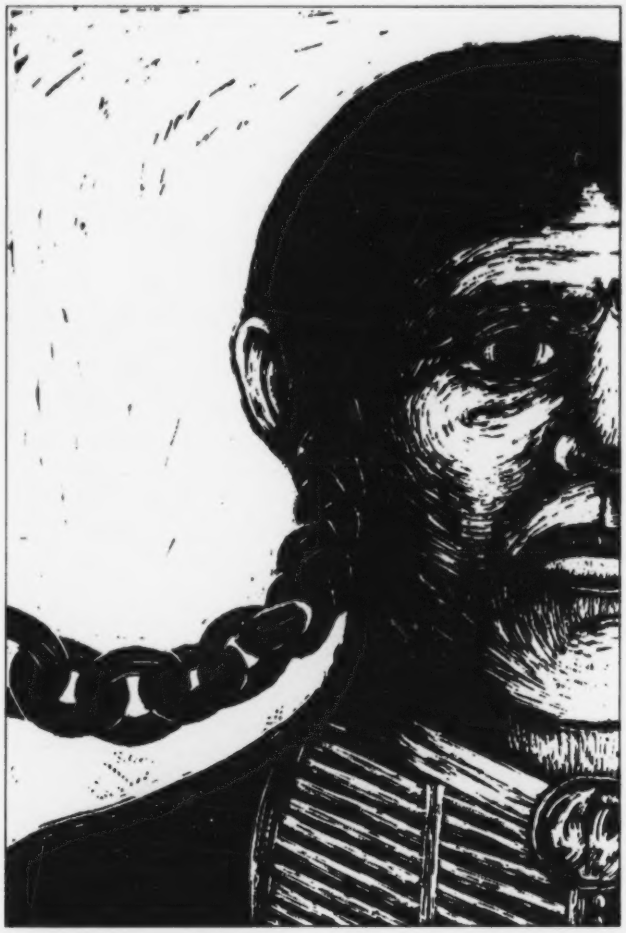
For instance, Winona LaDuke told us at the Minneapolis meeting how Anishinabe organizers at White Earth in Minnesota are raising funds, pursuing legal strategies, and employing media in their campaign to recover tribal land that federal, state, and county governments have held. The year 1992, she said, is an opportunity for them to bring increased public attention to their efforts and make land recovery a major state issue. Others discussed plans to organize in local communities around issues of religious freedom, protection of sacred sites, and economic development.

We also discussed events and protests that will draw attention to American Indian issues. The International Indian Treaty Council will have its annual gathering in the Black Hills of South Dakota in June 1992. Indian organizations in San Francisco, New York, and Minneapolis will coordinate responses to major quincentenary celebrations.

In the United States and Canada, many groups see the quincentenary as an opportunity to create new movement toward fundamental social change. In South

and Central America, the various popular movements are planning to stage major disruptions of government celebrations.

The second commitment made in Quito and Minneapolis was to resist non-Indian groups that attempt to exploit Indian people in 1992. In Latin America, Indian people have historically been a major factor in these popular movements. They have laid down their lives on the front lines of revolutionary struggles but have benefited least when revolutions were successful. Their



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demands for self-determination and land rights have been dismissed, ignored, or forgotten.

In the last 25 years, Indian people in the South have started their own political organizations out of their suspicions of popular movements, including liberation theology. In Nicaragua, for instance, the Miskito people have worked toward autonomous status. In Quito a Miskito delegate said, "Because of the Sandinistas we achieved autonomy, but our autonomy is in danger because of the new government. They are creating government offices that obstruct our work. But we are clear about our destiny and we will only take political positions that support our people. We won't be a tool of someone else."

Tensions between the indigenous and popular movements are not keeping Indians and non-Indians from working together in the South in response to the quincentenary. Important work has come from unified analyses of racism by indigenous people and African people of the Americas. The tensions remain, though, presenting the popular movement with new demands from Indian people for cultural and political autonomy. "We should never commit ourselves to powers that will endanger our identity," one Guatemalan delegate said in Quito.

The situation in the United States and Canada differs from that in the South insofar as many groups see 1992 as an opportunity to initiate some kind of broad-based movement for fundamental social change. As Philip Tajitsu Nash said in a recent Clergy and Laity Concerned newsletter, "This Quincentenary possibly provides progressives with our best opportunity since the Viet Nam War to come together in a forward-looking, broad-based coalition. This is an issue that has something for everyone."

Working in coalitions like Nash describes is easy for no one, but it has always presented Indian people with special difficulties, both in the North and the South. Our primary focus as Indian people must be on establishing our right to a land base and a cultural and political status distinct from non-natives. As Ed Burnstick said in Quito, "We [the Cree] see ourselves as a nation with our own culture, government, and we won't allow Canada to call us ethnic, a minority, or a class."

To realize our greatest hopes, fundamental change will have to take place, but Indian people have neither the numbers nor the resources to influence coalitions like our sisters and brothers in the South. As 1992 approaches, Indian people are finding our own power and our own voices. The quincentenary is a rare opportunity to speak for ourselves and bring the issues most important to us to the attention of people around the world.

SINCE THE 16TH CENTURY, Indian people have been surrounded by paternalistic mythology, getting lost in someone else's agenda. Within a few years of the invasion, Indians were a hot topic of political battles in Europe. People on one side described Indian people as savage brutes who deserved to be exploited, tortured, and exterminated. People on the other side described Indian people in glowing utopian terms and held Spain in contempt for its cruelty and injustice.

But these battles were always about Europe. The Spanish had finally expelled the last of the Muslims in 1492 and found in the Americas a way to reassert themselves through discovery and conquest. The English, on the other hand, published accounts of Spanish cruelty and injustice to fuel their anti-Spain propaganda machine. The church in Rome used New World evangelism as a way to divert attention away from its crumbling European authority. Protestants and reformers, on the other hand, pointed to the conquest as evidence of papist evil and decadence.

The same kind of battles have continued ever since—in Puritan New England, the winning of the West, Hollywood westerns, the environmental movement, and New Age spirituality. Indian people are forever being discovered and rediscovered, being surrounded by thicker and thicker layers of mythology. And every generation predicts our inevitable and tragic disappearance.

After five centuries, Indian people are still here,

resisting and surviving in whatever ways we can. We have been joined in that story by non-native people, such as 16th-century priest and historian Bartolomé de Las Casas, who spent their lives doing what they could to stand with Indian people in protecting land, culture, and human dignity. Las Casas and his comrades renounced their economic and evangelistic privilege in order to prove to themselves and to Indian people that they could live peacefully and respectfully.

The year 1992 can be a time for all of us to begin learning how to be in solidarity with each other, mutually empowering our struggles for justice and peace. If we can stand together in defiance of the self-congratulatory celebrations, perhaps we will see the way toward standing together in constructive praxis, respect, and hope for all humanity.

Within the informal network of Indians in the United States, we are working hard to find ways out of the mythological nightmare. At the same time, we are committed to keeping any one individual or group from using the quincentenary as away of exclusively advancing their own agenda or ideology. Many of us are also committed to finding ways to be inclusive of others—especially African Americans, whose middle-passage story of slavery and resistance began not long after ours. As one person at the Minneapolis meeting said, "No one owns 1992."

THE RUNA PEOPLE OF MEXICO BELIEVE THAT THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF THE AMERICAS WERE DIVIDED LONG AGO INTO TWO GROUPS—PEOPLE OF THE EAGLE (THOSE FROM THE NORTH) AND PEOPLE OF THE CONDOR (THOSE FROM THE SOUTH). WHEN THE EAGLE AND THE CONDOR REJOIN THEIR TEARS, THE RUNA STORY GOES, A NEW ERA OF LIFE AND SPIRIT WILL BEGIN FOR AMERICAN INDIAN PEOPLE.

At the closing session of the Quito *encuentro*, Rose Augér spoke for the North American delegation, saying, "I am glad that we came together, North and South. It is in our prophecies. We are a strong people. We are going to continue coming together in a strong way. People need to learn how to live again and help each other so we won't die at the hands of what has been oppressing us for 500 years. I plead with you that all of us learn to live in a harmonious way. I bless all of you who are here in a sacred manner. All my relations!"

WHEN THE *ENCUENTRO* WAS OVER, Indian people at a village called Huaycopungo feasted our coming together. From paper bags, we ate a dinner of goat, roasted corn, potatoes, and salsa. We walked together to a hacienda Indians recently took over for themselves. We laughed across languages. We gathered on a public field for speeches, our numbers having grown to 3,000 or so, raising our fists and yelling "Viva!" whenever appropriate and sometimes when it wasn't.

All night long we danced. Terengo bands from around the continent played songs of love and heartbreak. Even when I awoke the next morning, frozen to the bone at 6 a.m., three bands were still playing and people were still dancing.

In the midst of the speeches and the dancing, some of us from North America borrowed a drum and got permission to sing. We stood on the crowded stage of orators and musicians, waiting for our turn. Someone had lit some sage to bless the drum and our singing, and I knew then we would be doing an honor song. We passed the burning sage around, clearing our minds in its cloud.

Soon, we stepped forward to sing. The drummers began the slow, persistent beat of a Plains honor song that I did not know. Eugene Hasgood, a Diné (Navajo) man who lives on Big Mountain in Arizona, stretched his throat, tilted his head, and sang the first phrase, alone, in a face-contorting high pitch. "Way yah hey way yah hi yah." Two more men joined him at his pitch, and then all of us joined them in whatever octave was comfortable. Some of the women added high-pitched trills—we call it lu-lu-ing on the southern plains.

When the beginning came around again, I tilted my head, stretched my throat, and added my voice after Eugene's first phrase. We sang through the song more times than I can remember, each time gaining power and strength. I stood mesmerized by the sight of strong hands and muscular forearms beating drumsticks against the drum, beating out the Earth's pulse.

After the song, I left the stage and walked to the back of the crowd. I saw a non-Indian friend and asked how people had responded to the honor song. Most Indians from the South had never heard our music. My friend told me they seemed to enjoy it a lot. I mentioned what a great job Eugene had done leading the song. She agreed and said that the men who joined him on the second phrase were also very good. I smiled. She didn't know I was one of the people she was complimenting, but she had heard my voice.

Before 1492 and every year since, Indian people have been singing songs and burning sage and sweetgrass, whether people hear their voices or not. After the quincentenary, Indian people will still be singing songs and burning sage and sweetgrass, hearing and seeing what is on the other side of "the stink hiding the sun."

In 1992 clouds of sage smoke will be visible wherever people gather to crash the colonial party. The sweetgrass will not be so easy to find. The sweetgrass is what will linger after the countercelebrations and protests are over.

And if you listen closely, you will hear that music—the slow, patient drumbeat and the stretched-necked strains. When you do, join the circle, listen to the sounds, and smell the smells. And if someone invites you to add your voice, by all means sing. ■

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STUDY SESSION 7 / QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. History, as Carol Hampton reminds us, is written by the conquerors, in their own terms. American history is no exception. The role of American Indians is virtually ignored except as it impinges upon European-American history. Reflect on your own education. How much did you learn of American Indian history from the perspective of native people and in their voices? How does such treatment by society affect American Indians' participation in the society?

2. Hampton writes that American Indians are most often portrayed as a "dead race," as if Indian history ended sometime in the 19th century. When you think of American Indians, what images come to mind? That of an uncivilized, primitive people? A "noble savage"? Where do such images come from? How can people of conscience challenge and change such negative, racist images?

3. Why is it important to challenge the "Columbus myth" that Europeans discovered and conquered a pristine and untamed wilderness in the New World?

4. George Tinker says that the proclamation of the gospel has not been a liberating force for Indians, but a source of bondage. Historically, why was this so? Why, in Tinker's estimation, does this continue today?

5. What, in George Tinker's view, is wrong with many European Americans' approach to "reconciliation"?

6. Why does George Tinker feel Indian people may have an understanding of the gospel that is more authentic than that of white Americans?

7. Some European Americans have attempted to appropriate American Indian spirituality to meet their own spiritual needs. What are some reasons that many Indians find this practice inappropriate and even offensive?

8. Explain the concepts of respect and reciprocity present in the traditional American Indian approach to creation. How could these concepts inform those seeking justice for suffering peoples?

9. What are the implications of the idea that respect for creation must be the starting point for theological reflection? How is that different than, and how does it relate to, traditional European approaches to theology? What does Tinker mean when he talks about a theology rooted in space as opposed to one centered on time?

10. Robert Warrior uses sage and sweetgrass as symbols of characteristics—indignation and patience—that have helped the indigenous people of the Americas. Are these characteristics that non-Indians who desire to stand in solidarity could learn from? How?

11. According to Robert Warrior, indigenous people are suspicious of popular movements because of a history of unilateral commitment. In what ways has this been true? Is it necessarily true? How can this history be changed so that Indians and non-Indians could work mutually on issues of justice?

12. Over the five centuries since the coming of Europeans and Africans to the Americas, some non-native people have stood with Indian people in protecting land, culture, and human dignity. What are some potential pitfalls for non-natives when they try to act in solidarity with American Indians? How can such a relationship be truly respectful and mutually empowering?

13. George Tinker explains the history of official policies of the federal government regarding the American Indian. Are official policies today less harmful for American Indians than such former policies as extermination and assimilation?

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THE DATA *of a* NEW AMERICA

▲ AMERICA IS CHANGING. What was once a country made up primarily of people of European descent is now a multicultural quilt. And by the time today's elementary school children retire, this country will have no single ethnic majority. America will be a country of minorities, trying to find ways to co-exist.

The authors in this chapter offer thoughts, insights, and hopes about how we can build a culture that allows for more than mere co-existence. They envision an effective, inclusive, pluralistic, and democratic society that involves people of all racial and ethnic groups in the reinvigoration and expansion of such American ideals as tolerance, equality, liberty, and opportunity.

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TIME TO LISTEN AND ACT

WE HAVE SEEN THE FUTURE, AND THE CHOICES ARE OURS.

by Jim Wallis

A LETTER FROM A FRIEND reads, "Watching the painful images of Los Angeles in flames caused me to think of your community, always living in the middle of a 'low intensity riot.' "

This image has stuck with me. We describe wars of "low intensity conflict" in places such as El Salvador, South Africa, and the Philippines. But what is happening *all the time* in South Central LA, inner-city Washington, D.C., and countless other urban caldrons of human suffering across America can, in truth, be termed a low intensity riot. Tonight, the children in the inner cities of the world's only remaining superpower will go to bed to the sound of gunfire.

As we have seen the last few weeks, it only takes a spark to escalate from low intensity to high intensity. When the explosion comes, the preferred term on the street is "rebellion."

The next time someone says violence doesn't work, tell them they're wrong. It doesn't solve any problems, but it surely gets attention. In America, violence is about the only thing that makes us see the poor or even remember that they exist. The Los Angeles rebellion broke the long, frightening silence in both the media and the highest levels of national political leadership about the disintegration of life and society that is now the norm of existence in vast inner-city territories.

IN AMERICA, VIOLENCE IS ABOUT THE ONLY THING THAT MAKES US SEE THE POOR OR EVEN REMEMBER THAT THEY EXIST.

Since the riots, the media have been full of compelling stories about the destructive consequences, particularly for the young, of living without education, jobs, health, home, security, respect, hope, and any promise for the future. Politicians who have had little or nothing to say about the cities and the poor now are blaming each other for the problems.

The truth is, something has gone terribly wrong in our country, and America has just accepted it. As a nation, we have condoned the injustice, tolerated the suffering, and ignored the consequences. The majority of Americans has simply looked the other way and made sure their security was assured. There is more than enough blame to go around; the question now is who will take responsibility.

A gaping and aching chasm horribly separates us from one another; enormous walls divide those who have from those who have not. A violent rage has risen from this canyon of our great divide, and we are in grave danger of being overcome by it. This violence is not only rooted in crushing poverty, but also in our painful separation from one another. It is a moral consequence of nothing remaining sacred and everything becoming a commodity; of life not being cherished, but consumed; of our deep-seated individualism and failure to make community.

Historically, violence has drawn public attention, but this attention has not resulted in the action necessary to change the conditions that cause the violence. In the last several decades, the 11 commissions that followed the 11 periods of "urban disorders" have documented the problem in great detail, but the sustained political will for change has not followed. We are now witnessing the unraveling of America. Short of a profound change in national direction, this unraveling will continue and become more brutal.

THE PROPHETIC VOCATION always has two dimensions—truth-telling and the holding up of an alternative vision. In the wake of the events in Los Angeles, it is imperative that the religious community take up that vocation immediately—before it is too late.

So let's start with some truth-telling. When a black man can be beaten 56 times in 81 seconds by four white police officers, and a jury can be convinced the officers were only protecting themselves, the deepest pathologies of America's racial past and present are implicated in the judicial decision.

There was no question that Rodney King was brutalized; the issue was whether it mattered. The verdict, in effect, told every black American that it did not. The subsequent outpouring of personal stories of mistreatment and discrimination against African Americans in all social classes demonstrates the absolute and persistent reality of racism on every level of American life.

It is time for *white* Americans to step forward and

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FRAGILE HOPE IN LA

Rober Fox/Impact Visuals

In a dilapidated junior high school in Los Angeles, surrounded by the huge housing projects where the famous Crips and Bloods street gangs were born, I sat in a large circle with more than a dozen gang members, ranging in age from 13 to 18. Looking into their faces, I was struck that these were the young black men of whom America is so afraid. Certainly, young men like these have shown themselves capable of terrible violence. Yet sitting there, they looked so very young and vulnerable.

Members of both the Crips and Bloods testified that the "rebellion" after the Simi Valley verdict was not the most important event. Rather, it was when the gangs stopped fighting—"when young black males finally began putting their heads and hearts together." That began to happen even before the verdict. " 'Truce' is a media word," said one young brother. "It really is a coming together." One after another, they described this as the "most important historical event for African-American males."

The profound alienation of being young, black, and male in the abandoned inner city was evident throughout our conversation. Stories of constant police harassment, even since the "truce," peppered the discussion. As one young man noted, you "can't trust nobody who keeps degrading you." The connection to slavery was very strong in the consciousness of these young men. "We won't be slaves anymore."

Many said that gangs were "the only thing happening" in their communities. "All your friends are in gangs and you are too." "There's nothing else to do down here." "We don't have any positive role models." "We don't have plumbers, teachers, even shoe shine men in our families."

Feelings of betrayal ran deep. "The system told us that if we stayed in school, were nonviolent, grew up, got a job—we would get a piece. Didn't happen."

For years, these young men and thousands like them have been "stealin' and killin' 'cause that's all we knew." But now, they told us, "We woke up. It just didn't make sense to keep killing each other anymore." And, one brother added, "We don't want our community to be on the bottom all the time."

These were not young criminals who had decided to play it straight, but young men identifying the sources of their community's problems and deciding to do something. Fifteen-year-old black males were talking about the world they wanted to create for their children and grandchildren. I wondered if this might be the beginning of a more political consciousness among those young men whose number and influence could make them a very significant factor in our cities.

Though they feel abandoned by the church, they said, "We need churches to help us find ourselves spiritually. A lot of us have habits in our lives that only God can cure." They virtually pleaded with us, "We've been trying to find God for so long. All we need for our churches to do is take us to the Lord." They challenged the church leaders, "Could you imagine the power of a group of missionaries from our churches walking among our young people?"

Later in the week, I was given the "Bloods/Crips Proposal For LA's Facelift." Its recommendations for rebuilding LA are thorough and far-reaching. They're some of the best proposals I've seen so far and are greatly superior to the ideas coming from the official city rebuilding commission, the White House, and Congress.

"Don't rebuild LA the way it was," they told us. "Revitalize and restore the hope of the people, and the people will rebuild LA." Somehow, hope has arisen here in a place where most would have never considered it possible. It is not coming from any outside institution (including the church), but from somewhere within them and their reality.

A consistent message emerged throughout the discussions: "People need to learn to have faith in young black males. Black men have been a target for years. We need others to believe in us, risk something on us. All we want to do is have a chance to serve."

Perhaps it's time to act in ways that give young black men some faith in the rest of us.

—Jim Wallis

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address what Dan Rather referred to during the rioting as "America's problem." Those who say they care must stop leaving the task of addressing racism to black people.

White people are long overdue to begin a prophetic interrogation of our personal attitudes, social structures, and cultural and religious institutions in order to reveal and remove the racism we have long accepted or ignored. There is no more important test of white integrity than to act to heal the scars that slavery and racism have left on this society. To benefit from oppression makes us responsible for changing it.

The volume of calls to Sojourners and other organizations after the LA events indicates that many white people may finally be ready to deal with racism. We must hope and pray that this is so. White guilt isn't enough; it passes too quickly. It is white responsibility for attacking the root causes of racism that is most needed now. Racism is a pervasive cancer that is killing us. A black and white partnership must be formed to diagnose the disease and perform the radical surgery that alone will save our society.

We must stop pumping the moral pollution of rampant consumerism into the heads and hearts of the young, only to be shocked when they behave as selfish materialists. By creating the desire for affluence, then blocking its satisfaction, we are fueling a combustible engine of frustration and anger. We can no longer exclude whole communities from the economic mainstream, relegate them to the peripheries, tell them in a thousand ways that their labor and their lives are not needed, abandon their social context to disintegration and anarchy, and then be surprised when those communities explode.

When there are no ethics at the top of a society, it is unlikely that there will be many in the middle or the bottom either. It's not that urban children haven't gotten our values—it's that they have. The carnage of our inner cities is the underside of a consumer society that uses violence both as entertainment and as the preferred solution to conflicts with other nations.

Looting is a crude shopping spree reflecting a system that pillages and pollutes the rest of the world. When the kids on the street in LA said that "everyone was doing it," they didn't just mean other looters. The Savings and Loans rip-off bankers are looters too, as are the military contractors who always run over budget, and the Wall Street inside traders, merge-makers, and take-over pirates. It is time to take a strong stand against the criminal behavior of looting, all the way from the top to the bottom.

When presidents use racial fears and stereotypes to get elected, white jurors feel justified in using them too. And when the nation's top political leader demonstrates the emotional resolve to "do whatever is necessary to restore order" but not the passion to establish racial and economic justice, a clear message is sent. In the wake of Los Angeles, a hunger for justice must become a moral criteria for political leadership.

The problem nobody dares to talk about is the fact that no one even intends to include the children of our inner cities in the economic mainstream. They are not being educated, nurtured, matured, or disciplined in their hearts, minds, and bodies, because they are not in the plans of those charting the future. This is the heart of racism in the 1990s.

There are no jobs for the children of the inner city. The last manufacturing jobs in South Central LA departed in the early 1980s for Mexico, where cheap labor abounds at 59 cents an hour. The area lost 70,000 such jobs in the last three decades, and the same has happened across the country. In most neighborhoods like my own, the only "free market" left is the drug traffic.

It simply won't work to go on living as we do, consuming as we please, profiting as much as we can, and running the economy as we do, while using the money that is left over to "help the poor." There won't be enough left over, and the poor will lose the political debate. It is we who must change, and our patterns and institutions that must be transformed. There is much work to do and there are jobs to be found in creating the things we *all* need—education, health, energy efficiency, a safe and restored environment, healthy food, good roads, strong bridges, better transportation, affordable housing, stable families, and vital communities.

Such things can only be achieved by a combination of solid moral values and sound social policy. This requires a number of fundamental shifts in perspective—from unlimited growth to a sustainable society; from endless consumer goods to the re-prioritizing of social goods; from the habit of self-protection to an ethic of community; from viewing life as an acquisitive venture to restoring the sacred value of our relationships with our neighbor and our environment. These shifts will not be easy, nor will they come without cost. The only thing more costly is not to change.

The children of the inner cities may be uneducated but they aren't stupid. They know they've been left behind. They know there's no room for them. They feel little investment or stake in the future. And they are enraged.

The painful violence of the rejected and exploited always exposes a twisted mirror image of the dominant society. It's quite uncomfortable to see ourselves and the values of our culture reflected in marginalized people's frustrated rage. But if we refuse to hold the mirror up to ourselves now, it's just going to get worse.

During a night of violence in Los Angeles, a police officer and a young black man stood next to each other, watching a building burn to the ground. The officer asked, "How do you feel to see this place in flames?" The young man's answer flashed his rage. "You know what, man? The f— heat and steam comin' from this building ain't no worse than the heat and steam comin' from my heart....That's just how I'm burning inside. You don't have to believe it, you don't have to listen to me, you don't have to understand." I think we had better.

An angry African-American street organizer in another city said to me recently, "There's no hope from any of the politicians. The conservatives don't care, the liberals are bankrupt, and the secular Left is nowhere. The only hope we have is from an awakening of prophetic conscience in the churches, because the issues now are flat-out spiritual."

By proclaiming the vision that God had in mind, the prophets broke the oppressive yoke that bound the people in hopelessness and despair. If the national leadership to confront the roots of racism, materialism, and economic injustice is not forthcoming, then a new leadership "from underneath" must begin to assert itself. It's time to explore what that vision might be, asking in the aftermath of Los Angeles, "Where can we go from here?" ■

JIM WALLIS is the editor of Sojourners *and a pastor of Sojourners Community.*

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

THE NEW REALITY OF THE LATINO COMMUNITY

by Aaron Gallegos

In case anyone hasn't noticed, America has changed. The United States has become one of the most multicultural, multiracial, and diverse collections of people that has ever existed on the Earth. In Spanish this union of diverse elements is called *mestizaje*, referring to the cross between races. But it also connotes any mix or blend, or even confusion. Today in the United States, the swelling Latino community is one of the places this *mestizaje* is most evident.

Sheer numbers alone make Latinos in the United States a force to be reckoned with. The U.S. Hispanic population now approaches 25 million, and forward-looking observers of society are already calling Latinos "the new majority."

In the 1980s the Hispanic population of the United States grew by 53 percent; and at the turn of the century the Latino community will surpass the African-American community as the largest ethnic minority in the country. It is projected that by the middle of the next century nearly half of the population in the United States will be Spanish speaking.

This growth is also reflected in many of the religious denominations. Latinos comprise 35 percent of the U.S. Catholic Church (though less than 4 percent of the clergy). And the commitment of Latinos to Protestant churches, especially to the Pentecostal congregations since the early 1980s, has been unprecedented.

Though often painted the same brown-skinned hue by the media, the Latino community in the United States is wonderfully diverse. It is comprised of Chicanos of Mexican-American heritage, Cuban and Puerto Rican immigrants and their daughters and sons, as well as the refugees from Central and South America who have fled repressive governments and ravaged economies during the last decade.

THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE OF HISPANICS IN CALIFORNIA AND TEXAS IS AS SEGREGATED AS THAT OF AFRICAN AMERICANS WHO LIVE IN ALABAMA OR MISSISSIPPI, ACCORDING TO THE LA RAZA STUDY.

Rick Reinhard

The distinctions between these groups are both geographical and temporal, and include class and gender divisions as well. Though most are not wealthy, there is a richness of heterogeneity to be encountered in our barrios.

For many of those who live in Latino barrios in the United States, such as East Los Angeles, the Pilsen (Chicago), or the Magnolia barrio of Houston, economic and social position is becoming increasingly threatened. Because of the decline in industry-related jobs in the United States during the 1980s, the rungs of the ladder that Latinos and other people of color used to climb economically and socially are no longer there.

The economic and educational gains that Latino families experienced as they became "Americanized" can no longer be taken for granted. More and more young Latinos are leaving school for low-skilled, low-paying jobs in the service sector, further exacerbating the problem.

A recent article in *The New York Times* stated that about 51 percent of Latino teen-agers stay in high school

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long enough to graduate, compared with about 80 percent of their white peers. The educational experience of Hispanics in California and Texas is as segregated as that of African Americans who live in Alabama or Mississippi, according to this study.

The 1992 report by National Council of La Raza (NCLR) on the state of Hispanics in the United States showed that they were disadvantaged in "virtually every" measure and less likely than other major racial or ethnic groups in this country to complete high school or to have health insurance. Raul Yzaguirre of NCLR calls this growth in the Latino population a "new reality" that requires change on behalf of policy makers in this country—change that will encourage greater Hispanic participation in government social programs such as job training and Head Start.

Because of the geographic proximity of Latin America, Latino communities in the United States receive a constant flow of immigrants. This allows these immigrants to maintain their culture and traditions in a way immigrants who were part of the great waves from Europe and other places could not.

Thus, it is doubtful that Latinos will follow the melting-pot patterns of other ethnic groups—the "Out of the Barrio" theory of neo-conservative Latina Linda Chavez notwithstanding. And though these factors help ease the shock of relocation and have contributed to the flowering of a distinctly Hispanic-American culture, they also have caused the barrios to be perpetually viewed by mainstream America as Spanish-speaking, immigrant enclaves.

For many Latinos, especially Chicanos in the Southwest, there is something strange about being considered aliens in what we still think of as our land. It is important to remember that all of what is now called the "Southwest" of the United States was actually a part of Mexico until Americans invaded the country and forced the Mexican government to cede nearly half of its national territory away with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848.

In the beginning, it was not Latinos who migrated to this nation, but this nation that migrated to our lands. The failure to recognize this has resulted in policies and images that treat Hispanics as if they are in some way "alien" to the United States. The presence of Latinos, and the movement of others northward since that time, has been as central to the settlement of the United States as the migration of the Anglos westward in the 19th century.

THE CHURCH OFTEN INTERPRETS its mission to serve as a mediator, to help Hispanic people assimilate to North American society. And this effort has surely been

MESTIZO POPULAR RELIGION

FOR LATINOS, the quincentenary marks not only the anniversary of Columbus' arrival in the Americas and the beginning of domination based on race in America; it also signals the birth of a people. The collision of the two hemispheres which began 500 years ago not only brought corn and potatoes to the Old World and Christianity and horses to the New; it also produced the emergence of a new race of people.

Virgilio Elizondo, Mexican-American pastor and theologian, and author of *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise*, writes that the birth of the mestizo race is the most profound and hopeful product of the 15th-century events that brought Europe and America together. Conceived through a process of rape, enslavement, genocide, and the forced marriages of Native Americans by the Iberians and those who followed them, the Mestizos are an incarnate sign of the violence that accompanied the first meeting of these two different worlds.

But the inexcusable sins that the Europeans exacted on the indigenous American population were not the last word; Mestizos today are a visible sacrament of the power of hope.

According to the Mexican philosopher Jose Vasconcelos, the blending of cultures and genes that took place in the New World brought forth a "cosmic race," or *la raza cosmica*, which suggests a model for human unity that presages the future of the world. *La raza cosmica* is the result of a unique historical and cultural fusion that brought the Native American, African, and Iberian (which itself is a configuration of European, Middle Eastern, and African blood and culture) races together. The idea of *la raza cosmica* as "a symbol, a call, a vocation, and a promise" of new creation can be a dynamic symbol of empowerment for Latinos in the United States and Latin America.

THE ORIGIN OF *la raza cosmica* began when Christopher Columbus (Cristobal Colon) washed up on the shores of America and was consummated with Cortes' conquest of the Aztec empire in 1521. But it was not brought to birth until the appearance of the Virgin (Mary) of Guadalupe in 1531 on the hill of Tepayec outside of Mexico City.

Indigenous people noted the Virgin first appeared not to the ruling Spaniards, nor even to the Catholic priests or friars who piously struggled to convert the indigenous peoples from their churches and monasteries, but to an Indian convert named Juan Diego. And she appeared as a young, brown-skinned Aztec woman who spoke Nahuatl, the language of the conquered Aztecs.

The appearance of the Virgin of Guadalupe radically changed the relationship between the indigenous people of Mexico—and the Mestizos who would later come from them—and Christianity and the church. Instead of being coerced to follow a religion

imposed on them by a violent invading force, the *Mexicas* now suddenly had a religion that was uniquely their own, and a powerful intercessor to speak before the institutional church on their behalf.

History shows that until Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared in 1531, there were very few *Mexicas* who converted to Christianity, as opposed to the eight million who did so in the next seven years. As Elizondo writes, "The real miracle was not the apparition but what happened to the defeated Indian....They were no longer an orphaned people and the new religion was no longer that of foreign gods."

Long before the formation of liberation theology in Latin America, Guadalupe has represented for Latinos, from Juan Diego to Cesar Chavez, the miracle of God intervening in history to walk at the side of the poor and oppressed. Throughout the Western Hemisphere, she continues to represent God's preferential option for the poor of *la raza cosmica*, who travel together on a unique journey of faith between the world of the conquering Europeans and that of the pre-Columbian Native Americans.

The expression of popular religion, such as that which flows out of the devotion to *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*, represents a very important part of Latino theology. A theology that is truly based in the Latino people is not traditionally recited or theorized on (though significant theological works on the subject have recently been written); rather it is a faith that is lived and celebrated. Our true relationship to God in Christ is revealed in the songs, dramatizations, pictures, and personal devotions of the Latino people, not merely in cathedrals.

Historically, the practice of *religiosidad popular* has been one of the central ways Latinos live out their faith. With the shortage of clergy in predominantly Hispanic regions, this *religion casera*, or "homespun religion," has been a major factor in continuance of the faith among Spanish speakers in the United States.

As Moises Sandoval, author of *On The Move: A History of the Hispanic Church in the United States*, claims, "It is to them [the practitioners of popular religion], for the most part hardly literate peasants, that the faith owes its existence in the Southwest." In fact, often the deepest and most meaningful aspects of Latino religious tradition, such as the processions, *posadas*, pilgrimages, *altarcitos*, and the fiestas that followed them, depended on the *absence* of the clergy. As the Latino Protestant theologian Justo L. González writes, "The clergy have done their thing in the sanctuary, while the people of God have celebrated their faith in the homes, in the streets, and in the main plazas of their towns."

Because it opposes the cultural and religious influences of the dominant power structures, popular religion has been the most effective form of resistance for many in history, including Latinos in the United States. By inculcating the people with the gospel values of justice, reconciliation, and love for God and each other, popular religion is a wellspring for social change at the base of society. By inspiring its adherents with the challenge to transform society, the expression of our unique mestizo spirituality can play an instrumental role in promoting liberation for all of God's people.

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appreciated. Yet, a growing number of Latinos are finding there is a unique integrity in our identity as Mestizos who maintain racial, linguistic, cultural, and spiritual ties to our origins in the south (see "Mestizo Popular Religion," at left).

Latinos in the United States, living in the intersection between cultures, seek a middle way between assimilation to North American middle-class values and the sometimes archaic traditions of our own past. Members of the community seek to become full participants in U.S. society—politically, economically, and culturally—without having to abandon the unique characteristics and virtues of our traditions for the social balms of assimilation. The goal, and even the necessity, is the social and racial conglomeration that *mestizaje* represents; where harmony equals justice for the ethnic groups of this country—without which even what we have is threatened to be lost.

The agents of this transformation of a society that systematically produces poverty and discrimination are the poor and marginalized—people such as the Latino population who have not yet assimilated the materialism characteristic of much of the North American middle class. By living in the midst of the United States, Latinos have a unique role to play in the development of the prophetic church in North America. As Virgilio Elizondo writes, Mestizos in North America have "the task of asking some critical questions of U.S. society."

Just as in Latin America, the presence of the poor and oppressed calls the church to a radical reinterpretation of the Bible. The incorporation of Latino culture and theology into the spectrum of religiosity in North America opens the way for fresh insight and historical perspectives to be brought into the church. Latinos in North America have the potential to move the church to new frontiers—broadening and enriching it with our bi-cultural mestizo thought and experience. As Mexican Carlos Fuentes has written, "Cultures only flourish in contact with others; they perish in isolation. Isolation means death. Encounter means birth, even rebirth."

FOR MANY LATINOS, ESPECIALLY CHICANOS IN THE SOUTHWEST, THERE IS SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT BEING CONSIDERED ALIENS IN WHAT WE STILL THINK OF AS OUR LAND.

Incarnate in the Latino community is what Elizondo calls a new "religious *mestizaje*" that is a cross between Old and New World traditions and the perspectives of the North and South. A mestizo spirituality that embraces and brings together both our fundamental humanism and the promise of the resurrection leads us toward a new way of being church as a community of equals, of many languages and cultures, and made up of a people of many colors. It is this richness of our life together that will prove to be the Christian expression of the future. ■

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FASCISM WITH A FACELIFT

RACIST IDEOLOGY IN THE POLITICAL MAINSTREAM

by Danny Duncan Collum

There's good news and bad news in the results of the Louisiana gubernatorial run-off on November 16, 1991, and the presidential primaries of 1992. The good news, of course, is that voters soundly rejected the Republican ex-Nazi and Klan leader David Duke as a candidate for both governor and president. The political hurricane warning has passed, and a sort of quasi-sanity can return.

The bad news is equally obvious. David Duke did carry a majority of the white vote in Louisiana. He did gain the national media platform he so desperately sought. It was only Pat Buchanan's capturing of the protest vote that took Duke out of the presidential spotlight. And, like one of those slasher-movie villains, Duke will no doubt return.

IF NO GENUINE PROGRESSIVE ALTERNATIVE EMERGES BY THE END OF THIS CENTURY, DAVID DUKE MAY NOT BE THE LAST FASCIST POLITICAL CANDIDATE TO MAKE INROADS INTO MAINSTREAM ELECTORAL POLITICS.

The very fact that a totalitarian extremist such as Duke has come this far is certainly cause for alarm. But even more, it should be the cause for hard thinking about what this bizarre phenomenon can teach us about the increasingly strange, and strained, state of our nation.

First of all, let's make one thing perfectly clear. David Duke is not just a former Nazi. He may have severed his organizational ties to the Far Right and dropped most of his blatantly obvious racist and anti-Semitic terminology. But he is still a fascist, in the full historical and ideological sense of that term. He espouses a philosophy that prizes order and racial identity over freedom and cultural tolerance, and he seeks the power of the state to enforce those prejudices by any means necessary.

In the late 1980s, as he contemplated electoral office, Duke went to a plastic surgeon and had his face Aryanized with a nose and chin job. He has tried to do the same with his ideology. But he is still just a fascist with a facelift.

Duke claims his flirtations with fascism were youthful folly canceled by a later Christian rebirth. But in 1986, at the age of 35, Duke was interviewed by Evelyn Rich, a graduate student researching the Klan. Among other things, he told Rich, "We don't want Negroes around. We don't need Negroes around....We simply want our own country and our own society." He also said that the American economy is dominated by "...Jews, Jews, Jews, and more Jews. They raped the country economically....I don't have any hatred toward the average Jew. I think I've got a lot of enmity towards the Jews as a whole. I resent what they're doing. I resent them."

Duke also ran for president in 1988, first in the Democratic primaries and in the fall on the ticket of the neo-Nazi Populist Party. His campaign manager that year was a minister from the anti-Semitic Christian Identity movement. In 1989 Duke snuck into the Louisiana state legislature by 227 votes in an off-season special election. Later that year he was discovered to be selling Nazi books and tapes out of his legislative office. This was only a few years ago. Duke has yet to issue any moral repudiation of his past associations, and his past associates still populate the inner circle of Duke advisers.

OF COURSE THE vast majority of Duke supporters in Louisiana are not Nazi sympathizers. Most of them simply want to support him so badly that they choose to believe Duke's skimpy and halfhearted claims of repentance. The reasons why they want to believe the man are rooted both in Louisiana peculiarities and in national realities.

To start with the local, Louisiana has a truly eccentric electoral system in which candidates of both, any, or no political party all run together in the same nonpartisan primary. Then the top two vote getters, regardless of party, square off in a final run-off. This system is tailor-made for a free-floating maverick, of any stripe, who can exploit an incendiary issue and excite an intense following. If Louisiana had a system like every other state, David Duke would be buried in the party primaries and never heard from again.

In addition to the peculiarities of the electoral system, Duke also benefits from a tragic paucity of mainstream political leadership in the state. Louisiana voters are right to feel that they had no authentic choice in the 1991 gubernatorial election. Despite earlier posi-

tive accomplishments, Edwards is now most remembered for the days in the mid-1980s when, with his administration sunk in a bog of corruption, he ineffectually fiddled while the oil bust obliterated the Louisiana economy. Buddy Roemer was elected to replace Edwards, and he quickly earned a reputation for inconsistency, unreliability, and prickly egotism, all perfectly symbolized by his sudden flip-flop last year from the Democratic Party to the Republican.

In brief, many Louisiana voters felt personally betrayed by and angry at the two leading mainstream personalities in the race. Given those options, some people who should have known better probably turned to Duke as a misbegotten protest vote.

But there are other betrayals and other angers at work in the Duke phenomenon which signify far beyond the borders of Louisiana. Louisiana is in an economic depression and has been since the early 1980s. The Reagan recovery never visited here, but the Bush recession has and things are continuing to get worse. In addition, the oil-and-chemical industry, which promised Louisianans a future of endless progress and prosperity, is now revealed to have poisoned the state's land and water and a significant portion of its people.

Dan Hubig

The traditional two-party political options for dealing with hard times and disillusionment (symbolized by Edwards and Roemer) have been tried here and have failed. Now comes a (recently retired) White Knight on a metaphorical white horse who promises the white majority that the answers to their problems are easy. They don't have to pull together with their neighbors and do the hard work of forcing big business to take people's lives and communities into account. No, Duke tells them, all they have to do is go back to punishing "those people," who they never really liked very much anyhow, because "those people" are the ones who are responsible for the mess we're in.

IN THE NEWLY euphemized lexicon of the post-Nazi Duke, "those people" are "the rising welfare underclass." He claims that, through the subsidized breeding of the welfare system and the unfair special privileges of affirmative action, "those people" are eating up the resources, and taking away the jobs, which are the white man's rightful legacy.

This, of course, is the historic fascist appeal. And at most times in our history most Americans have felt secure enough to laugh it off. But faced with a poisoned economy, a poisoned environment, and a poisoned political process, we shouldn't be surprised that some working- and middle-class white people will become susceptible to the poison of racialist solutions. Our white people are, after all, no smarter or more enlightened than were the Germans of the late 1920s and early '30s.

Duke is the first and most extreme case of a new fascism making mainstream inroads. But if no genuine progressive alternative emerges by the end of this century, he may not be the last. After all, Louisiana's economic and ecological problems are not different in kind from the rest of America's; they are only further advanced. National analyses of the Duke phenomenon have made much of the fact that his appeal has broadened beyond the traditional low-income, white, working-class constituency usually mined by racist extremists to include significant numbers of the "middle class." This is true. But most pundits fail to see that this is only symptomatic of the fact that the "middle class" in America is sliding back toward relative poverty and disenfranchisement. And it will not go quietly.

Finally, the field for Duke's fascism was fertilized by a dozen years of Republican rule in the White House. In 1980, at the beginning of his presidential campaign, Ronald Reagan traveled to Neshoba County, Mississippi, where the three civil rights workers were killed in 1964. But Reagan didn't come to Mississippi to deliver praise for the transformed and integrated New South. Instead Reagan delivered a speech calling for a return to "states' rights." States' rights was, of course, the code word of the Southern segregationists in the 1950s and '60s. From that day forward the signal went out loud and clear, and not just to the South, that racial discrimination, and outright racism, were again tolerated components of American culture.

Of course, George Bush amplified that signal in 1988 with the infamous Willie Horton campaign. In 1992 Bush has shown every sign of preparing to steal the thunder of old-time segregationist Jesse Helms by campaigning on a code-worded platform of "Quota! Quota! Quota!"—which translates, "Willie Horton is coming to take your job." Bush rushed to get his name onto a civil rights bill in order to distance himself from David Duke Republicanism. But the fruit never falls far from the tree. As Duke himself says, "I agree with most of the things that President Bush does."

If we are serious about expunging racism, at least from American public life, we will have to start simultaneously at the bottom and the top. At the top we need clear signals from political, religious, and cultural leaders that racism is un-American, un-Christian, and unacceptable. At the bottom we need a genuine attempt to understand the forces that lead frightened and insecure white people into the racist trap, and a new politics that can unite people of all races around what are, for the most part, shared grievances and aspirations. ■

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'...WITH LIBERTY AND EDUCATION FOR ALL'

A CHANGING AMERICA CALLS FOR CULTURAL INCLUSION IN THE CLASSROOM

by Anthony A. Parker

How does a nation define itself? What are its mores and values? And with what cultural codes does it inform its worldview, enabling it to decide which direction to take as a polity?

In the United States, not too many generations ago, questions such as these were easily decided, if they were asked at all. This was the acknowledged America: Eurocentric-Norman Rockwell-apple pie. These were the tenets of Americana, reinforced in the classroom. There are signs, however, that this is changing.

The New York City public school system is a prime example of the shift. Its student population includes 359,903 African Americans; 321,476 Hispanics; 186,512 whites; and 69,356 students from other ethnic groups. Whites comprise just 20 percent of the public school population.

The changing demographics of education will have a major effect on all aspects of public policy in the years ahead. Look at the faces of children now entering kindergarten and their primary school years: They are every color of the rainbow. These children speak with many accents, have different needs, and are ushering in an entirely new set of realities.

The social tremors caused by rapidly changing racial and ethnic demographics in the United States can most easily be tracked through the public school systems in our large cities. Blacks and Hispanics comprise the majority of students being educated in urban public schools in the East. Hispanics and Asians are, or soon will be, the majority of students attending public schools in California, where whites make up only 40 percent of the public school population. As more children enter the public school system and eventually leave to replace an aging, predominantly white adult workforce, education is not only critical to minority advancement, but to the stability of the country itself.

The social influences of education are central to understanding the education reform debate. No matter the issue—be it prayer, sex education, or censorship—the classroom has been the laboratory for social experiments in this country. Unfortunately, public education is often a political football tossed between taxpayers, politicians, and the courts.

As the most tangible evidence of a nation's commitment to a way of life, public education is the first line of defense of our national security. When that commitment is threatened or altered, the disruption that follows will ultimately affect the entire social order.

Race is a prime example. The landmark 1954 U.S. Supreme Court ruling *Brown vs. Board of Education*, outlawing segregation in public schools, constituted a major crisis in the social order in the South. Desegregation battles in the mid-'50s and early '60s in places such as Little Rock, Arkansas, and Oxford, Mississippi, and the battles in Boston around the issue of busing in the early and mid-'70s, were school issues with ramifications far beyond the classroom. What was at stake then and now are values.

In the 1990s, public education, for better or worse, is a major purveyor of values in this country. As such, it is vulnerable to the actions and reactions of society's most important institutions: church, government, family, and other social groups.

Values derived from different races, ethnicities, cultures, histories, and experiences in this country must somehow be taught to children. And the curricula used in public school classrooms are the key to how well these different strands are woven together and taught to children from diverse backgrounds—all toward the purpose of creating good citizens, critical thinkers, moral beings, and active participants in a still very young democracy. But before this process can be legitimately done, the record must be set straight.

IN NOVEMBER 1987, NEW YORK STATE Education Commissioner Thomas Sobol convened the Task Force on Minorities: Equity and Excellence. This multiracial task force was asked to examine the education department's curriculum and instructional materials to see if they adequately reflected the diverse student population. In July 1989, the task force's findings were published in a report, *A Curriculum of Inclusion*.

According to the report, "The various contributions of the African Americans, the Asian Americans, the Puerto Rican/Latinos and the Native Americans have been systematically distorted, marginalized, or omitted." It continued, "European culture is likened to the master of a house ruling over a dinner table, himself firmly established at the head of the table and all other cultures being guests some distance down the table from the

John Sprague Jr.

master, who has invited others through his beneficence. A curriculum of inclusion, stated the report, "is seen as serving the interests of all children from all cultures: children from minority cultures will have higher self-esteem and self-respect, while children from European cultures will have a less arrogant perspective of being part of the group that has 'done it all.'"

Needless to say, the report caused an uproar. An editorial in *The Wall Street Journal*, "Curriculum of Diversion," derided the report's call for cultural inclusion by saying, "If schools spend their resources fretting over the worth of Western culture, it's likely that children will be more woefully unknowledgeable in the basics than they already are."

AT ITS BEST, EDUCATION IS A SYSTEM OF CARING RELATIONSHIPS; AT ITS WORST, A PARENT AND CHILD SIMPLY TAKE THEIR CHANCES.

The New York Board of Regents, to its credit, took the report's findings to heart and authorized a review, and if necessary a revision, of New York state's elementary and secondary curricula. Still, Commissioner Sobol felt compelled to justify and explain the Board of Regents' decision: "Our population is becoming increasingly diverse—ethnically, culturally, and linguistically. By the year 2000, one of every three New Yorkers will be what we now call a 'minority.' About 90,000 people annually emigrate to New York state from other countries. New York state is home to some 40,000 Native Americans belonging to eight tribes or nations....

"We cannot understand our complex society without understanding the history and culture of its major ethnic and cultural components. We face a paradox: Only through understanding our diverse roots and branches can we fully comprehend the whole. Only by accommodating our differences can we become one society. Only by exploring our human variations can we apprehend our common humanity."

New York City is in the process of establishing a curriculum of inclusion. The plan in the Big Apple is twofold: It seeks to be both multicultural and multiethnic. The difference is critical. "Multiethnic specifically deals with different ethnic enclaves," said Herb Boyd, a consultant with the New York City Board of Education. "Multicultural extends beyond ethnic groups to include gender, the handicapped, gays and lesbians, and feminists."

The process is lengthy, tedious, and highly political. Boyd, who is black, is trying to develop lesson plans with a strong African-American presence in the social studies unit. The goal, according to Boyd, is to highlight aspects of black culture.

Boyd and his colleagues have developed a two-step plan. The first step lays out black history from Africa up until the Reconstruction period. The second step examines Reconstruction up until the civil rights era.

Boyd, who has been at work on the project for three years, is only one of several consultants and advisers from a variety of ethnicities. There are also experts in Chinese history, Native American history, Latin American history, Jewish history, and Irish history. Using primary sources to represent each group's history is essential, according to Boyd, because it is much easier to defend in terms of accuracy and relevance.

Each group of experts came up with an overview, which then was examined by outside experts. Department heads, teachers, and parents are all part of the refining process. The final authority is the New York City public schools chancellor.

The curriculum being planned in New York City is designed to aid teachers in the classroom. "Teachers are less prepared to teach about ethnic enclaves, let alone American history," said Boyd. "Having a document outlining various groups' histories will enable them to work along with textbooks." The curriculum now being constructed in New York City is also designed to be flexible so teachers can adapt lessons to their class composition.

THE STATE Department of Education in California is the acknowledged leader in incorporating cultural diversity into school curricula. The department has developed a model called Education for Cultural Inclusion (ECI). This model also focuses on teachers and other education professionals.

"Staffs are the focus for training because, traditionally, it has been the education professional who is the culture carrier," according to Dr. Minta Palmer Brown, manager of the Cultural Inclusion Office of the California State Department of Education. "Throughout various 'reform movements,' programs have been found to be no better than their implementors."

Brown, too, is quick to distinguish between education for cultural inclusion and multicultural education. "Multicultural education has not been successful in bringing Americans together. The focus on ethnic studies or global education has only served to foster misperceptions regarding pluralism, diversity, and culture," according to Brown. "The culture of the United States is being taught as a collection of fragments rather than as unifying complementary elements. Education for Cultural Inclusion is predicated on the understanding that this culture is a unique, multifaceted entity, characterized by cultural diversity."

Several African-American organizations around the country have focused considerable energy on cultural inclusion in school curricula. In Portland, Oregon public schools, *African-American Baseline Essays*, a curriculum supplement for teachers, examines the experiences of ethnic groups in each academic discipline. *Essays* was introduced to Portland by noted black psychologist Asa G. Hilliard III of Georgia State University in 1981.

How different is a culturally inclusive curriculum? You learn how instrumental the Chinese were in building up this country's railway system; that without Native Americans the Pilgrims could not have survived in the New World; that Africa is the birthplace of science and mathematics; that in the 15th century, Europeans began to edit out of the history books the contributions of Africans to world history.

It is startling to realize the accomplishments of African Americans in this country that never made the standard historical record. Consider this: A slave, Onesimus, developed the concept of vaccination against

smallpox in Boston in 1721 by describing his own inoculation against the disease in Africa to his owner, who in turn informed city doctors.

Ever hear the term "the real McCoy"? It stems from the numerous inventions of Elijah McCoy, a Canadian born to runaway slaves. McCoy invented the ironing board and lawn sprinkler. His most popular invention was the lubricating cup, which revolutionized the machine industry.

Garrett A. Morgan invented the gas mask, the safety helmet, and the prototype for the traffic light. And Archie Alexander designed Washington, D.C.'s Tidal Basin and Whitehurst Freeway.

Lloyd Wolf

Critics of culturally inclusive education say that it is not germane to teaching children the basics: reading, writing, and arithmetic. But as important as what you teach is how you teach. An inclusive curriculum provides a sense of self-esteem and an accurate sense of history and culture. By seeing themselves represented in history books, by learning of accomplished heroes who look like them and who contributed in all areas of society—math, science, religion, politics, industry, commerce, and the arts—children will be encouraged to continue reading and learning, as they have a vested interest in wanting to contribute to the life and thought of this country.

"The development of the human spirit is important," said Dr. Egon Mermelstein, a professor in the Basic Sciences Department at the College of Aeronautics at LaGuardia Airport in New York City. "Teachers must emancipate children and free them to learn. Mutual respect, listening to each other, fostering a sense of community, and caring—subject matter is the vehicle through which these values are communicated."

AS MORE STATES BECOME "majority minority" states, ensuring people of color a good education for placement in a competitive society is critical. But who will pay for the special needs of many poor minority children already in, or soon to be in, school? Drugs, illiteracy, teen pregnancy, violence, other social ills, and tightening budgets are forcing teachers and administrators to become surrogate parents, psychiatrists, and social workers.

"Kids have to deal with a lot more than I did growing up," said Katie Baggott, a former elementary school teacher on New York City's Lower East Side. "I've had kids who came into my class shaking because their dad was dragged off to jail the night before; really traumatic things."

Baggott, who taught from 1985 to 1989, recalled how one girl in her class wrote as an essay "a very matter-of-fact account of seeing a man shot while on her way to the store for some M&Ms candy." Many of the children in the school where Baggott taught spoke Spanish and lived in welfare hotels. Having nowhere to go after school, many were provided dinner as well as after-school programs.

"Our nation is at risk," lamented *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, a report released by the National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983. "America's position in the world may once have been reasonably secure with only a few exceptionally well-trained men and women. It is no longer....A high level of shared education is essential to a free, democratic society and to the fostering of a common culture, especially in a country that prides itself on pluralism and individual freedom."

The crisis in education is inextricably linked to the status and quality of life afforded to minorities and immigrants in the United States. Although *A Nation at Risk* does not make this point outright, state officials can no longer ignore the obvious.

"Over the course of the next decade, our nation must better educate far more Americans, of all ages, to new kinds and higher levels of knowledge and skills than ever before," according to *Educating America: State Strategies for Achieving the National Education Goals*, a report released by the National Governors' Association. "We must do this with an increasingly diverse population, many of whom face substantial economic, social, or other barriers to learning, such as the effects of substance abuse, teen pregnancy, or inadequate health care."

The report is a follow-up to the six national goals for education outlined by the governors at the education summit held at the University of Virginia. The goals, to be realized by the year 2000, are ambitious and significant because they emphasize the point that education, primarily grades kindergarten through 12, cannot teach a child without the help of the wider community. Readiness for school; school completion; student achievement and citizenship; mathematics and science; adult literacy and lifelong learning; and safe, disciplined, and drug-free schools—these goals signal a call for greater interdependence between public schools and other areas of life that directly affect a child's performance and attendance in school.

Harold L. Hodgkinson, an analyst with the Institute For Educational Leadership in Washington, D.C., makes this point in *The Same Client: The Demographics of Education and Service Delivery Systems*, a study he authored in 1989. "While it is useful for educators at various levels to communicate, it is no longer enough for the urgent problems we face. Service organizations must begin to see their interdependence across functional lines," according to Hodgkinson. "It is painfully clear that a hungry, sick, or homeless child is by definition a poor learner, yet schools usually have no linkage to health or housing organizations outside those run by schools themselves."

The objectives for several of the national education

goals are significant, as an ethic of caring is linked to the actual process of educating. Consider, for instance, the objectives for goal one, readiness for school:

* "All disadvantaged and disabled children will have access to high quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs that help prepare children for school."

* "Every parent in America will be a child's first teacher and devote time each day helping his or her preschool child learn; parents will have access to the training and support they need."

* "Children will receive the nutrition and health care they need to arrive at school with healthy minds and bodies, and the number of low birthweight babies will be significantly reduced through enhanced prenatal health systems."

The two objectives for goal two, school completion, raise similar concerns. The first objective is to reduce the dropout rate and raise to 75 percent the number of people who return to high school or receive their equivalency degree.

The second objective is reducing "the gap between American students from minority backgrounds and their non-minority counterparts." Reducing the gap means that socially disadvantaged children are put into a system—not now in existence—that sees the child as a whole being, not stigmatized by such socially destructive terms as "crack baby," "problem child," "juvenile delinquent," "homeless child," "welfare child," or "abused child."

Goal three, student achievement and citizenship, and goal four, adult literacy and lifelong learning, stress critical thinking, community service, personal responsibility, and effective communication (reading and writing). These objectives not only expand the nature of education but also how we must think about education—specifically, its ultimate purpose. Toward what end are we teaching?

"It seems that the whole society got materialistic and the education system with it," according to Katie Baggott. "The main job of the educational system [now] is to have kids function at a job. There is not a lot of emphasis on exploration, intellectual and creative stimulation." As a result, Baggott believes, "we downplay what a child may actually be capable of."

IT IS MY OWN SCHOOL EXPERIENCE while growing up in New York City that leads me to agree with Baggott's comment. At its best, education—public or private—is a system of caring relationships. At its worse, a parent and child simply take their chances.

I remember one particularly troubling occasion at P.S. 61, Leonardo da Vinci Intermediate School in Queens. I was in sixth grade, class 6C, an SP (special progress) class. One day, midway through the school year, the assistant principal walked into my homeroom class and told me that I was being transferred into 6N. I was to report to that class the next morning.

As I now write these words, I am getting angry all over again at how impersonal his message was and how public. When you are 10 years old and in the third-ranked class in the sixth grade, to be told suddenly in front of your classmates that you are being transferred into the 14th-ranked class is embarrassing. In the few seconds it took for my mind to absorb this bad news and the shock of it, the opinion of my classmates of me changed from "peer" (meaning somewhat smart) to "dumb."

The next morning I reported to class 6N. I told the teacher that I really did not belong there and that no one explained to me why I was being transferred. Had I been struggling in my subjects? The new homeroom teacher did not know me or my history. As a matter of fact, she did not know that I was to be in her class for the remainder of the school year until I showed up and told her.

The most painful part was the plummet in expectations for me by my teachers. I had no relationship with them or my classmates, or with the guidance counselor who was absent during this two-week nightmare and the administration that had arbitrarily removed me from one social group to another. Everything was different: expectations, requirements, friends, attitudes toward school and learning, values, and life chances. Although I was put back into class 6C after two weeks, no explanation was given to me except that a mistake had been made.

In her essay "An Ethic of Caring and Its Implications for Instructional arrangements," Nel Noddings, professor of education at Stanford University, writes: "Teachers, like mothers, want to produce acceptable persons....To shape such persons, teachers need not only intellectual capabilities but also a fund of knowledge about the particular persons with whom they are working. They cannot teach moral education as one might teach geometry or European history or English; that is, moral education cannot be formulated into a course of study or set of principles to be learned. Rather, each student must be guided toward an ethical life—or an ethical ideal—that is relationally constructed."

In the '90s, freeing a child—no matter what color, ethnicity, or culture—to learn in an inclusive, caring, creative environment will entail coming to loggerheads with the values that are idolized in the wider society—competition, exclusion, and unhealthy notions of power. Education cannot happen in a vacuum. The educational system is both an advocate and a recipient of values. No one teaches or learns for teaching or learning's sake alone. A point of view is involved.

The educational reform debate is both necessary and complicated—involving teacher salaries, respect for the teaching profession, school maintenance, neighborhood control, bilingual education, special education, and parent involvement. Reforms in any one of these areas are only as significant as the moral importance we attach to them. These various strands all help to create an environment in which a moral education can take place.

As we approach the 21st century, attempting to solve our education crisis within the framework of a system designed for the population of the America of a century ago is futile. We need to start over.

One teacher recently asserted: "What is needed first is a 'revolution in thinking.'" This is where education reform must begin. ■

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AN OPPORTUNITY FOR LEADERSHIP

WHERE LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE POLICY HAS FAILED

by Eugene Rivers

Philosopher George Santayana's observation that those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it is, one would think, so logically obvious as not to merit elucidation. Not so in this country, where amnesia is a political virtue. From its inception, the United States has been, according to the eminent diplomatic historian Gabriel Kolko, "a nation blind to itself—its past...and its future."

Recent developments in Los Angeles tend to confirm these views. LA's black *intifada* was inevitable. It was simply a matter of time and circumstance. As things stand currently, this *intifada* may have been simply a dress rehearsal. Amidst this crisis, however—which is only the most recent chapter in an ongoing drama—there are valuable opportunities.

The political events following the acquittal of four white Los Angeles police officers in the Rodney King affair incontrovertibly demonstrate at least two factual realities: (1) the utterly delusional state of national elite policy intelligentsia, journalists, and politicians on matters of race; and (2) the primacy of an explicitly anti-black racism—as opposed to merely a problem of "race"—as the predominant dynamic driving the electoral behavior of non-black interest groups in national politics.

In my judgment, the polarization of the United States into a *de facto* apartheid state in our domestic Sowetos provides a singular opportunity for the church to present a unique political perspective, grounded in the theological affirmations of the confessional community. The first opportunity for the churches is intellectual. The importance of an accessible body of fresh theory and analysis of the transformation and patterns of racial stratification cannot be overstated. It has been the absence of just such hard analysis that has crippled the churches' capacity to anticipate trends and effectively respond to them.

In the wake of the LA uprising, the moral rhetoric of "racial reconciliation" of the peace and justice wing of the church is no longer a rational substitute for the kind of sustained structural analysis we need. Instead, new black and white church leadership should work together to construct mutually supportive and realistic programs for action, filling in the gap where liberal and conservative policy regimes have failed.

Based on our work with gang members and young drug dealers in inner-city Boston, we at Azusa Christian Community have developed a "Ten-Point Proposal for Citywide Mobilization to Combat the Material and Spiritual Sources of Black-on-Black Violence." This proposal has evolved out of our view that sooner or later the *intifadas* would begin among those classes of young people that the church and the larger society had rejected.

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Anticipating such a possibility in Boston, we began a little over a year ago to develop an aggressive strategy to hit the streets, courts, and jails. We are now calling upon churches, church agencies, and the academic theological community throughout the city to consider, discuss, debate, and implement any one or more of the 10 ideas, which include: to establish "Adopt a Gang" programs that organize and evangelize youth in gangs; to commission missionaries to serve as court advocates for black and Latino juveniles; to train street-corner evangelists to work with youth involved in drug trafficking; to do informal pastoral work with troubled and violent youth and their families; and to establish rape crisis centers and services for battered women that also provide counseling for abusive men.

The crises generated by the capitalist urbanization process present an opportunity for the emergence of new moral and intellectual leadership. If the community of faith—black or white—rises to the occasion, we may be able to retrieve a generation cut adrift. If not, we will have brought down the judgment of God on ourselves and inadvertently fueled the fire for the next time. ■

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STUDY SESSION 8 / QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Jim Wallis suggests that the prophetic vocation of religious communities must include two elements—truth-telling and offering an alternative vision. How well does the church respond to each of these elements of its prophetic ministry? How could congregations improve upon their commitment to each of these two elements?

2. Jim Wallis says, "There is no more important test of white integrity than to heal the scars that slavery and racism have left on this society." Do you agree that white Americans have a unique responsibility for changing racist structures? List concrete suggestions about how white people could begin to alter these structures.

3. Anthony Parker argues that public schools are the laboratory for social experiments in America. Why? If public schools are the arena in which America's future diversity is already being played out, how can people of faith ensure that topics related to pluralistic culture and racism are raised in the classroom?

4. Multiculturalism in public schools has become the subject of much controversy in recent years. What is important about multiculturalism? What is potentially problematic? What makes multicultural education so threatening to some people?

5. The authors of *A Nation at Risk*, a report released by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, claim that unlike in previous eras, America's future is now dependent on the education and inclusion of all its people. Does government policy reflect this important insight? Is education a necessary element for democracy?

6. In the New America, what are the essential elements for building a successful public education program?

7. Danny Duncan Collum warns of a dangerous political mix represented in David Duke's candidacy for various political offices: Duke emphasizes both racial separation and social order. What in Duke's platform especially attracts people whose economic circumstances are precarious?

8. How have the statements of recent national political leaders legitimized the rhetoric of neo-racists such as David Duke? What are some realistic alternatives to the growth of neo-racist groups in the face of the demographic changes in the New America?

9. The authors of Session 6 argue that integration has been detrimental to the African-American community. David Duke preaches a message of racial identification and separation as well. Yet these two perspectives are rooted in vastly different values. How do they differ?

10. Eugene Rivers likens the LA rebellion to the Palestinian *intifada*. Are there similarities between the two events? Rivers maintains that the events in Los Angeles were merely a dress rehearsal for future events if systemic changes do not come about. Do you agree with his statement? How do you respond to it?

11. What concrete actions does Eugene Rivers believe the church must take "to retrieve a generation cut adrift"? Do these activities resonate with your understanding of the call of the gospel? Why or why not? Can you imagine the church committed to these activities? How can this be brought about?

12. The Hispanic population in the United States is experiencing unprecedented growth. How does this reality affect your community? Your church? What is your reaction to the ever-growing *mestizaje* phenomena?

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A CALL *to* ACTION

▲ REMEMBERING THE SCOPE OF RACISM and its impact on individuals, the church, and society, we can begin to seek ways to implement our desire for personal and systemic change. This resource has discussed the need for profound change. In order for this vision of change to come to fruition, a long-term perspective must be developed and short-term plans must be made.

The aim of this chapter is to stimulate discussion about ongoing programs and activities that can facilitate both personal and systemic change. Taking action against racist beliefs, organizations, policies, and practices is the necessary next step for those who envision a future that includes racial harmony.

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RAGE AND RECONCILIATION

TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

by Catherine Meeks

The Miami riots during the summer of 1980, the increased activity of the Ku Klux Klan, the murders in Atlanta, my work at Grady Hospital in that city, and a recent visit to my childhood physician's office, which continues to be segregated, have brought me face to face with rage in general and with the depth of my own personal rage. While I realize that some of my rage comes from the world not being the way I would like, a great deal of it comes from having to live as a black American.

There are many times when I wonder if we black people would not have been better off if we had stayed in Africa, and perhaps we would have, if we had had a choice. In our history and process of transition, we have lost a large part of our souls.

I AM SIMPLY NOT CLEAR ABOUT THE GAIN FOR A PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN A LAND THAT PROMISES LIFE, LIBERTY, AND HAPPINESS BUT FORGETS TO MENTION THAT THE PRICE FOR THESE IS THE LOSS OF OUR SOULS.

I am simply not clear about the gain for a people who live in a land which promises life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness but forgets to mention that the price for these inalienable rights is loss of our souls. Much of the rage that fills the psyches of African Americans comes from the wounds of unkept promises. While a great part of this rage is expressed as justified anger at having no decent places to live, no real jobs, poor educational opportunities, inadequate medical care, and unfair laws, I believe the rage is far deeper than these issues alone.

When Grier and Cobbs wrote their bestselling book *Black Rage* in the 1960s, all of us sat up and took notice because the smell of the smoke and flames in Watts, Detroit, Newark, and other cities was still in our nostrils. But as the fumes evaporated so did our concern. Our desperate need to go on with business as usual pushed us to do just that. It was as if we had discovered a giant, oozing sore and were worried that it might be cancerous. Therefore we put a Band-Aid on it and refused to see a doctor. Unfortunately, Band-Aids have no power to cure and often provide no assistance at all.

It is easy to see just how malignant the sore is each weekend in hundreds of cities as black-on-black homicide continues to rise and we view the prison statistics and compare the ratio of blacks to whites who live behind bars. Another indicator of the cancer is the rise of fatal diseases among blacks, the psychological rape and homicide of massive numbers of black children in ghettos all across the land, and the spiritual deprivation which is so evident by simply walking through the areas where black people who have been labeled undesirable live.

All of us are responsible, blacks and whites alike. We who are black have tried to tell you who are white that we would like to be reconciled. But after you turned your backs, we called you deceitful honkies, the man, Charlie, or any other derogatory name we could imagine. The reason is simple: We hate you. Yes, we do. We hate you because we have not begun to forgive you or your ancestors for their enslavement of our ancestors; nor have we forgiven you for today's oppression of us, which comes primarily from the system that you protect and rule.

The issue of black rage was raised in a profound way for me during the time of my clinical internship in social work at Grady Hospital. I chose to work on a cancer ward in order to deal with the issue of death and dying. As usual, many other issues besides the one which led me to Grady surfaced, and I came to understand something about the need to acknowledge rage. I came to see the necessity of matching internal and external reality.

As long as we talk about reconciliation without acknowledging our very real and legitimate rage, we are trying to have a manipulated reconciliation which is a great deal like Bonhoeffer's cheap grace. Most of the time a black person would not consider sharing with a white person what she is really thinking because no trust exists between them, and there is so much rage. Only the reality of trust in a relationship and its ability to bear up under the truth will allow rage to be shared.

There are precious few places anywhere in the world where this can happen, and there are even fewer places where a black person would dare share his or her true feelings. This fact saddens me, but it angers me, too,

because as long as we try to live in this atmosphere of unacknowledged feelings, we create an environment that allows us to be possessed by those feelings. These negative feelings make up part of our personal darkness and become our subconscious shadows. Since all of us have a shadow, it is quite easy to project on to others those qualities which we have refused to face. Blacks and whites make excellent companions on whom to project their shadows.

Our only hope is for blacks to start owning our personal darkness. Our wounds are not totally the fault of whites. We are persons, and we must accept responsibility for the lives which have been given to us. We have to struggle for wholeness just like our foreparents. We must choose between life, which involves struggle, or death.

Lloyd Wolf

Many of us have chosen to die both physically and psychologically. But the choice between life and death is before each individual black person, and nobody will make it for us. The Savior has already come, and no other savior will be coming. The Savior who has come wants to live in us and through us, and his life in us can make a difference.

Yes, we need jobs, good medical care, houses, schools, and better laws; but the deprivation of the soul is not going to be met by any of these things, as necessary as they are. As we move toward allowing our external places to become expressions of our internal places, and make for ourselves the connections between our heads and hearts, we set in motion the forces that can heal our souls and create an atmosphere where community might emerge.

WHITE PEOPLE AS WELL AS BLACK people have a responsibility to be honest about their rage. White people have plenty of rage which demands acknowledgment, as well as guilt about the heritage of slavery. It is not enough to say that you didn't have anything to do with slavery and that you don't feel guilty about it. Perhaps you don't have a sense of guilt, but blacks and whites share a collective history, and just as blacks have to deal with slavery, so do whites.

As a white person you are a partner in the oppression which your foreparents created. The denial of this partnership has created a lot of pseudo-relating between whites and blacks. This type of pseudo-relating comes across as patronizing liberalism, and the world is not in need of more patronizing liberals. The denial of the feelings around this whole issue on the part of whites simply adds fuel to the fires of mistrust and deepens the wounds of both races.

Yes, there is rage in you and in me, too. It's OK. It's real. God loves us in spite of it. It doesn't matter how we feel. The good news is that as we own our rage it can become a thing which we can control instead of letting it control us. As we move into our journeys toward wholeness and allow the light of Calvary to shine upon us, that rage can be transformed into energy which heals instead of destroys.

That energy can create the atmosphere for reconciliation if we will become serious about it. At the present time there is very little real reconciliation between the races in this country. There is instead a fragile coexistence that can be tilted very easily.

Even the rhetoric of the religious community about reconciliation is simply that—rhetoric. Most churches are still segregated. Few relationships between blacks and whites exist which are based on equal respect and mutual trust. Even the blacks and whites who talk about reconciliation at the national level still cringe when they consider the prospect of intimate inter-racial relationships developing in their own families. Those old wounds of power and sex have not been healed even in the Lord's church.

Recently a white woman from one of the churches in my area called a black church to find a person who might like a job as a janitor. Several months ago I was invited to speak at a dinner in a very wealthy church; the meal was served by blacks who later did the clean-up. There were no blacks in the audience when I gave my speech. A lot of talk about racial reconciliation goes on in this church, but blacks are present there only in the role of servants.

Quite frankly, I don't believe that the United States is ready for racial reconciliation. Our deep desire to avoid hard tasks and the pain which goes with them leads me to this conclusion.

Only out of the biblical mandate for reconciliation between God and human beings can racial reconciliation grow. All of us must confront our places of darkness and light so that we can become convinced of how short we have fallen in this regard.

As I walk the halls of Grady Hospital and look into the eyes of my people, feeling their rage, seeing their slumped shoulders, and listening to their swallowed words, I am not very hopeful about reconciliation between the races. I am equally hopeless when I am invited to middle-class black and white churches and realize how much we have invested in not rocking the boat.

My only hope comes from finding the courage to look to Calvary and to trust that somewhere else others will look there and will find it impossible to say no to him just as I find it impossible to say no. Somehow in the "Yes, I will follow you, Lord," is hope for all of us that race might be put into perspective and that we might get on with the journey toward wholeness. ■

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HEALING THE SICKNESS

A CONTAGIOUS STRENGTH OF WILL

by Dorothy F. Cotton

There are so many signs of our country's sickness: racism at worst and general disease at best. Simultaneously, there are marvelous examples of growth—change from the old patterns of "petty-apartheid." For one who knew the pain and humiliation of being told, "We don't have toilet facilities for y'all," and whose father feared to tell a white salesperson the radio in his new car didn't work, I cannot deny the growth and change.

We've come a long way, but we still have a long way to go. We don't know each other; we don't let ourselves know each other across racial lines. Without this knowing, we develop and hold suspicions of each other. I include all of us in this generalization, though it is blatantly clear where economic power lies.

I believe healing of the sickness—that is, racism—will happen faster, yes, if whites wake up, own the problem as their own, and make demands for change upon economic, political, and social leaders who hold concrete, specific power in these areas; if those holding real power see a changed social and economic order as desirable, take steps for change, and realize the legacy to their children when they pass on their racial prejudices. Could it be that an awakened generation could prove Frederick Douglass wrong when he said that power corrupts and concedes nothing without a struggle?

Healing of this sickness would also occur more swiftly if black people in larger numbers would heal themselves—of the scars left by a legacy of oppression; of the hatred spoken and unspoken; of the pain and the fear born of having to wonder "if I am capable"; of the lost confidence that submerges one into a morass of inertia; of the hostility when we realize the dead ends, especially in the corporate work world; and of the "black orthodoxy" that tenaciously holds worn-out language, perceptions, and interpretations of our problems that are no longer valid and that no longer serve us well. We must become bold healers, so we must first heal ourselves.

"WHERE DO WE GO FROM here?" Martin Luther King Jr. observed more than 20 years ago that we had come a long way but still had far to go. That this observation can be as relevant today as in 1967 suggests, perhaps, that this struggle against racism is forever. But because we have noted some progress, even more must be seen as possible.

We come into existence to learn things, said one spiritual teacher, such as how to love better. How have we not evolved beyond the primitive fear of difference so we can love better? As long as we hold on to fear of the unknown, of not having enough, of death, we will not be free to love. We will instead build walls around ourselves, presenting unreal images and thwarting the very possibilities of building community where differences can be celebrated.

To want a non-racist world would move us forward; wanting it is something massive numbers need to awaken to. A change in the consciousness of groups and individuals will bring about the wisdom and responsibility needed for this change to spread. Openness to learn this big lesson must be facilitated in schools and religious institutions and wherever awakened people are functioning. A climate for this growth must flow from state houses and the White House.

Intolerance of racist behavior must become a national mandate. People must be helped to understand root causes of their racism and taught the efficacy and joy of wholeness. We have the "technology" and now need only to activate the will.

A young white man on a plane recently asked me, "Why do we have to have black magazines? They feed separation." I found a large part of me agreeing with him even as I explained that we are an invisible people, except as the white media, with all its distortions and racist projections, wish to portray us. My agreement took the form of realizing that there would be no need to produce black magazines if every time we picked up *The New York Times*, *Better Homes & Gardens*, or *Life* magazine and every time we viewed television we could get reports that include a focus on issues of special concern to historically excluded people. The "magazine of the people"—all the people—must be the ideal for which to work. In a non-racist society, this would not seem strange. ■

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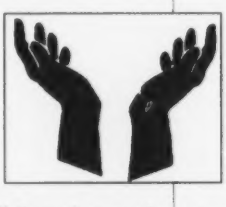
THE COLOR OF MONEY

CUTTING THROUGH CLASSISM

by Lorraine Granado

My father was 4 years old when he began working in the fields with his migrant farm worker family. As a teen-ager during the Great Depression, he watched as his baby brother died of starvation because the family could not find work. He later said to me, "We could stand at the gate and see the cows in the field, but they would give us no milk for the baby." On one of their first dates, he and my mother had to leave a restaurant because they hadn't noticed the sign in the window that read "No dogs or Mexicans allowed."

Conventional wisdom would have us believe that such racism no longer exists. However, the fact that a disproportionate percentage of the 33 million poor, two million homeless, and 17 million jobless and underemployed people are people of color contradicts that wisdom and demonstrates a fundamental link between racism and classism.



Migrant farm worker children are still forced to work in the fields because low wages dictate that all healthy members work in order for the family to survive. The children of the poor and working poor still suffer the pangs of hunger; in this land of plenty, 10,000 of them die every year from the effects of malnutrition. And to those who cannot provide "payment upon receipt of services," the doors of hospitals, universities, recreational facilities, mental health centers, and other necessary services are still closed.

Why? How can this happen in the richest country in the world? It happens, I believe, because this country was built and is maintained by exploitation of the labor and resources of people of color here and abroad. Today the profiteers are, in large part, weapons contractors and salespeople. In the name of defense and with the cooperation of Congress, they annually rob our national treasury of hundreds of billions of dollars. While we all share the cost, it is people of color—the working poor and women and children—who pay the biggest price.

That those of us who value people before profits must engage in the struggle for change is a given. That most citizens of our country are decent people who would welcome nonviolent change is our hope. That the peace and justice movements have not been able to develop an organized, unified strategy for change is our problem.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE PEACE MOVEMENT, in the words of a black peace organizer, "isn't too peaceful." With a few notable exceptions, it has behaved in a manner that emulates rather than challenges the very bases of racism and classism. We do this because, in large part, we focus our energy and take our cues from members of Congress instead of working with people in grassroots communities.

We have not learned from history that real change comes from the bottom up and not the top down. Thus we have structured organizations that are top-heavy with white male leadership, lack substantial support of people of color, falter in the process of democratic decision making, and exclude issues which would provide a basis for a unified peace and justice movement.

If we are to have meaningful social change, then we must acknowledge that how that change is achieved is as important as what that change is. If our vision is that of a world where all people live as brothers and sisters and heed the call to "love one another," then we must demonstrate by our actions—and with our very lives—that this call is our highest agenda. We must not ask, as many Christian churches do, that those in need wait for a "someday heaven" where the rewards will compensate for the selfish cruelties of today.

We must follow the example of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., by going where the people are and serving them to the best of our abilities. We must attempt, as they did, to heal and empower those in need. Our struggle must be a struggle for peace and justice—for one cannot be accomplished without the other. This struggle must be engaged first in the streets, churches, and schools—and then in the Congress, legislatures, and board rooms of America.

In the words of Martin Luther King Jr., "We are faced with the urgency of now." We must begin today to examine ourselves and our organizations to find the spiritual and human failings that have held us back from the unity, solidarity, and sacrifice that will lead us to a just peace. ■

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SQUANDER NOT THE GRACE OF GOD

GOD'S VOICE IN A BURNING BUSH

An interview with James Lawson.

■ *Rev. James Lawson is pastor of Holman United Methodist Church in Los Angeles. He was a primary trainer for many of the nonviolence movements of the last 30 years, most notably the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in the 1960s. Lawson was interviewed by telephone in June 1992, just after the rebellion following the Simi Valley verdict.*

—The Editors

Sojourners: As a pastor, how is the Bible relevant to your recent experiences in Los Angeles?

James Lawson: I feel that in the fires in LA, God is offering the community of faith another burning bush experience. In Exodus the burning bush caught hold of Moses' attention so that Moses could hear God saying that it is the world that sets God's agenda. Chapter 3 is very clear: I have witnessed the misery of my people; I have heard them crying out because of their oppressors; I know what they are suffering; and I have come to rescue them out of the hands of the Egyptians, to bring them out of that country and into a new land that flows with milk and honey.

Rev. James Lawson

The fires of LA are the fires of frustration and pain and misery and oppression. They are an indication of the frustration of millions of people who cut across the lines of class and color, if we want to hear it.

But the "Egyptians" do not want to acknowledge this. Pharaoh wants to pretend that it's the looting and killing that's immoral and that law and order must prevail. The burning bush offers people of faith and people across the nation a different look, an opportunity to stop and hear what is going on among all people.

Excessive force is violence; racism is violence; economic exploitation is violence. And they all perpetrate the myth of "we and they"—the myth of racism.

Sojourners: You have a long record of nonviolence. In the rebellion in LA, did you see a spark of resistance, of hope?

Lawson: In some nonviolent thinking, the notion exists that it is better to fight physically than to acquiesce in the midst of evil; that in the midst of evil, passivity does the greatest harm. While many folk have felt that drugs and materialism have clouded people's anger, the people burning and looting were demonstrating a spark that still exists. At least they can say, "I too am angry, I too am mad."

Some people looted because others were looting, according to testimonies I have heard. But they also were saying, "I'm tired of putting up with the stuff I'm putting up with, and I see so much pain and corruption and so little recognition that these matters can be changed."

I disagree with the burning and the looting. I nevertheless must acknowledge that it represented some degree of hope that people are not so immune and mesmerized—that the ways in which society is trying to create acquiescence have not succeeded.

I had a long session recently with some of the young, black gang members in one of the housing projects. It's clear that they are frustrated and tired of taking the abuse. The rioting has not abated that feeling. On the contrary, while there is some more caution, there is nevertheless the feeling that the police had better back off, stop the abuse, and not sabotage the gang truce. They are saying, "We're going to protect our families and protect our turf."

The truce that we're developing is a permanent truce. There was such a truce back in the '60s when many gang people in LA went into the Black Panthers. During the '60s and early '70s, gang activities were minimal because so many members moved into constructive activities. Once kids saw that they had better options, there was a clear reversal of the gang movement.

Sojourners: You have been doing this work since the '50s. What will become of the events of Los Angeles 1992?

Lawson: I'm still trying to assess that. It has to be said that all of the forces of good will in the United States have fundamentally failed to reverse the Reagan/Bush backlash and the deterioration of the quality of life of millions of people.

We have strong sanctuaries, movements, and organizations committed to nonviolence. We've got churches that are very conscious of the variety of issues that are continuing to impinge upon the well-being of people. But that has not taken the edge off the regression of life in the last two decades.

We've probably been too lukewarm, too comfortable in going about change. We must recognize that this may be a premonition of what is to come.

This is a call to the leadership of good will, to the leadership that talks about peace and justice. I think it is a very clear word to the political apparatus, and it's a word about repentance.

Mark's gospel represents the germ of what Jesus was really preaching as he entered in to his full-scale ministry: a call to repentance, a call to recognize the *kairos* moment, a call to realize the kingdom of God was at hand. In repentance we change direction and move toward the light, toward God's startling new order.

We accept the fact that the difficulties of the old order can be conquered. The power of God is able to destroy the principalities and the powers. It is able to transform racism into new dimensions of spiritual understanding, creating a movement that is able to transform injustice into justice. God is not dead, but that God, by God's own choice, will not usher in the kingdom unless there are people who are paying attention and listening and becoming aware that the light is in their midst.

We must neither pretend that Simi Valley is an aberration nor deny that God is present. We must listen to the burning bush. To do otherwise would be to squander God's grace. ■

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UNDERSTANDING INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

SYSTEMS THAT OPPRESS

By Joseph Barndt and Charles Ruehle

A society is composed of a great number of institutions. They may be either private or public, but all are interconnected through their common task of helping the society to function. Institutions give expression to the organized activities of a community and serve its various needs.

The institutions in our society are countless, yet each purports to serve a specific clientele. Governmental institutions claim as their clientele all citizens within their jurisdiction. Each state replicates the federal image with offices and agencies. Local municipalities do likewise; each city hall, library, police department, and hospital is a public institution.

Each and every business and industry in our nation, large and small, is an institution, whether factory, office, or retail store. Within the communications industry, each newspaper, radio and TV station, magazine, and computer network is an institution. Every school and university, each sports team and franchise, every art gallery, dance studio, and a thousand more groups are institutions. The list seems almost as numerous as the stars and constellations. Theoretically, each institution represents and collectively acts in the name of those whom it claims as its members, its owner, its clientele, or its citizens.

These are the institutions of which we speak when we address the question of institutional racism. In this light, we address this article primarily to a white audience with the hope that our analysis will form a foundation for creating new strategies to dismantle racism.

WHEN WE EXAMINE INSTITUTIONAL racism, the issue of power must be emphasized. Racism is more than bigotry or racial prejudice—having distorted opinions about people of other races. Racism is backed up by power—it is the power to enforce one's prejudice.

As our nation oppresses its people of color, our personal bigotry and prejudice do not cause the primary damage. Rather, the damage is done by racism that has been institutionally empowered. The simple reality is that the institutions listed, which theoretically represent all people in a fair and equal way, do not do so.

These are the forces that make us, as individuals, into racists. They are the forces that transform individual prejudice into corporate racist action. Through these institutions, the subordination and exploitation of America's people of color take place.

RACISM IS MORE THAN BIGOTRY OR RACIAL PREJUDICE—HAVING DISTORTED OPINIONS ABOUT PEOPLE OF OTHER RACES. RACISM IS BACKED UP BY POWER—IT IS THE POWER TO ENFORCE ONE'S PREJUDICE.

We might understand this better if, like people of color, we were on the receiving end of racist educational, housing, welfare, police, labor, political, and economic institutional activity. Then we would see that racism is more than the actions of an individual teacher, real estate agent, social worker, police officer, ward leader, or bank teller, as devastating as that can be. These people merely represent the institutional structure, organization, policies, and practices.

Institutions have power to control lives, but people of color have no reciprocal power to direct and control the institutions. Consciously and unconsciously, these institutions have been designed to benefit the majority of Americans, to the detriment and oppression of the minority.

As we turn to a more detailed examination, let us maintain our awareness of the power these organizations wield over people of color, who are the target of institutional racism, and over ourselves, who are simultaneously its prisoners, its functionaries, and its beneficiaries.

Institutional racism is practiced in two ways, which we will call "direct" and "indirect." Direct institutional racism is always conscious and intentional, openly practiced without apology. Indirect institutional racism may be intentional or unintentional. Indirect racism, when intentional, is deliberately disguised or hidden from public awareness. However, indirect racism that is unintentional is far more complex. It exists with a life of its own and is extremely difficult to eradicate.

CONSCIOUS, INTENTIONAL RACISM, practiced

openly, with the force of law and without danger of serious disapproval, was once the only form of institutional racism. Until the 1960s, there was little need for any other kind. At first, the institution of slavery required little legal control. But soon a need developed for laws to govern the behavior of slaves and, to a lesser degree, of the slavemasters. Following emancipation, and the end of reconstruction, laws were created for effective segregation and control.

Likewise, a body of laws and several institutions were created to control Native Americans, both on and off reservations. African Americans and Native Americans were the chief targets, but Hispanics and Asians were also excluded from eating, sleeping, residing, walking, riding, working, playing, worshiping, voting, or doing virtually anything at the same time or place in which white people were doing these same things.

THE SIMPLE REALITY IS THAT OUR SOCIETY'S INSTITUTIONS, WHICH THEORETICALLY REPRESENT ALL PEOPLE IN A FAIR AND EQUAL WAY, DO NOT DO SO.

It is impossible to comprehend institutional racism today without understanding its connection with the legalized system that was only recently dissolved. Each practice of institutional racism still in force today can be historically traced to those conscious, intentional, and legal activities of the past.

Residential segregation by the housing and real estate industry is an excellent example of deliberate and historically traceable institutional racism. Segregated housing is no accident and our own communities have not remained mostly white because "those people" did not want to live there. Almost every American city and town has a separate area, a "ghetto," where African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, or Native Americans were permitted to live. Public records show that these communities exist because institutional decisions were consciously made by the political bodies holding power in each city, town, and country.

Almost any area of public and private institutional life yields examples which you can investigate in your own setting. The segregation and poor quality of ghetto schools was produced by intentional design, traceable to decisions of local school boards. The tiny number of people of color holding management positions in business and industry is no accident. White exclusiveness in most labor unions, high crime rates among people of color, and their predominance in prison populations—these and a thousand other manifestations of institutional racism can only be understood in light of historically traceable institutional decisions.

CIVIL RIGHTS LEGISLATION OF the 1960s eliminated major portions of legalized institutional racism. According to the law, people of color could now eat, sleep, work, play, worship, vote, own property, and do anything at the same time and the same place as white people. Legally, the long struggle had paid off. Direct institutional racism had been effectively eliminated within the United States. However, before the victory could be celebrated, it became clear that institutional racism was not coming to an end but was going underground.

Today it is clear that the end of *de jure* (legalized) racism has failed to bring about the end of *de facto* (actual) racism. Direct institutional racism has been replaced by indirect forms, intentional or unintentional, that are, in many ways, more powerful and destructive than before, especially because they are more difficult to detect and eliminate.

Many devious methods have been developed intentionally to perpetuate racism in indirect ways. Although many people are dedicated to bringing about changes that will help achieve a racially just society, it is impossible to exaggerate the extent of the duplicity and treachery still being practiced by many of our nation's private and public leaders in order to control and exploit people of color in our society.

Instances of intentional indirect racism are to be found in every area where direct racism once flourished. When it was legal, the real estate industry simply refused to show or sell property to a person of color. Now ingenious schemes and systems of "steering" customers toward or away from locations primarily designated for one particular racial group are used. Likewise, banks that once gave or refused mortgages to anyone they chose have created such strategies as "red-lining" to achieve similar results. Recent studies have documented dramatic racial disparities in mortgage lending in major U.S. cities.

Employers who once accepted or rejected workers according to their personal racist views have developed other criteria to disqualify and exclude unwanted persons. Educational standards are manipulated; residential requirements, age, height, and weight limitations are added. Governmental elections and representative appointments have been influenced by the secret gerrymandering of political boundaries. Unlike decisions of the past, these deliberate decisions are rarely recorded and, therefore, seldom traceable.

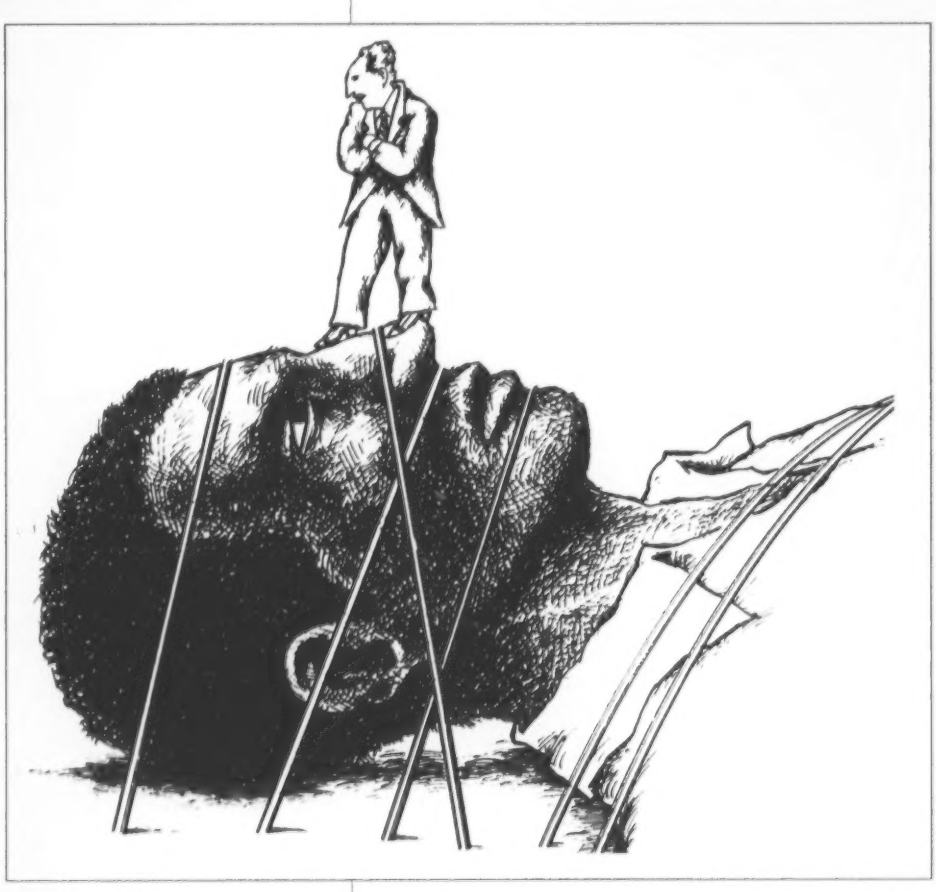
Not all of these practices are actually illegal. Often they are by-products of what is perceived as "good business." In recent decades, major banks as well as supermarket chains and other commercial businesses have closed their branches in poor urban communities. Are such decisions judged simply on the basis of a financial bottom line? Or do institutions also have responsibilities to the society?

Here we enter into an area where indirect racism may be unintentional. Many manifestations of indirect racism are by-products of institutional policies. It may even be that while on one level an institution honestly seeks to be non-discriminatory, on another level it continues intentional or unintentional indirect racism. If practices alone, and not their results, are scrutinized, they may appear, or actually be, innocent of intentional racism. The results, however, are what count. Racism is still at work if there are no significant changes from the time when direct racism was practiced.

Indirect racism is evident when institutional representatives justify their lack of success in hiring or promoting employees of color by saying, "We want to, but we can't find qualified people." A process of deliberate and direct racism throughout our history created the conditions that prevented many people of

color from becoming properly educated and well-qualified for a host of occupations. Now indirect racism rejects them because they are poorly educated and ill-trained.

We have looked briefly at direct and indirect racism. Now we take a further step to look at the various levels and expressions of racism within institutions and organizations.



Dan Hubig

EVERY institution has five levels at which racism may be operating: attitudes and actions of personnel, policies, practices, structures, and foundations. Frequently the only racism acknowledged by an institution is on the first level of personnel attitudes and behavior. In reality, the racism that exists on the other levels is far more serious.

Let us take the example of a police sergeant who is an outright bigot, an intentional racist. He never tries to understand people of color. He is arrogant and rude toward people of color, and never fails to evoke negative responses from them. For people of color, one individual's racism makes the entire police force appear racist.

Similarly, a teacher who is racist makes the entire school system appear racist. A bigoted court clerk or judge infects the entire legal system. A salesperson who shows hostility toward people of color creates the impression that all of the store's employees are racist. In short, when a "person" is also "personnel," he or she personifies the institutions.

Of the five levels, institutional racism in *personnel* is easiest to identify and alleviate. Education and training programs can help new and existing personnel change attitudes and behavior. More people of color can be hired. Special programs can help multiracial staff relate well to one another. Finally, it is possible to fire someone who refuses to change behavior.

Changing the racial attitudes of personnel is not enough. Far more significant is the racism embedded in the next two levels, the *policies* and *practices* of the institution.

Institutions are guided by vast numbers of policies, and some are informal and unofficial while others are formal and theoretically practiced by everyone in the institution. An example of the latter, which can affect racial justice within the institution, is that of personnel hiring requirements such as age, education, height, physical condition, and residence. Examples of policies that are informal, perhaps known only to a few, would be a separate advancement track for favored personnel or a private product listing for favored clients.

Sometimes personnel may be carrying out racist institutional policies and practices without realizing it. Let us look at an insurance firm in New York City. The firm's employees have received training to deal with their individual racism. In terms of personnel, this insurance firm has achieved a record of excellence.

However, this same institution has indirect and unintentional racist policies and practices that result from the economic realities and residential segregation of the communities in which it conducts business. This results in rates that are significantly higher in areas largely composed of people of color. When the institution's personnel, including many persons of color, implement these policies, they carry out the institution's corporate racism.

In identifying racism within an institution, it is important to understand the distinction between policy and practice. Racism in practice may be the direct result of fulfilling racist policy. Or it may exist in contradiction to official policy or even in its absence. A police department may have a stated policy of equal protection for all neighborhoods, but its practice may be very different. A school district may have a policy that all

schools receive educational materials of equal quality, but its practice may not fulfill this policy.

Although it is a more difficult challenge than working with personnel, racism in institutional policies and practices can be eliminated. In developing a pluralistic institution, it is crucial to eliminate every racist component of policy and practice by redesigning them in a racially just and sensitive manner.

The fourth and fifth levels of institutional racism are found in its very *structures* and *foundations*. When racism is found predominantly within the institution's first three levels, changes are not overwhelmingly difficult. However, when dealing with the final two levels, change is far more elusive.

By institutional "structures," we mean organizational units, administrative design, methods of production, product- or service-delivery systems, service boundaries, and similar elements. Structural racism can exist in any of these areas. It occurs when the institution's defined boundaries of service exclude people of color or serve them unequally. It exists when products or services are of inferior quality or more costly for people of color.

Structural racism occurs when leadership of a multiracial community or institution is either appointed by or solely accountable to a powerful minority (usually white) within the institution. It is a structural issue if the staff or leadership of a multiracial community or institution is predominately white and does not represent proportionately its membership—teachers in a school system; clergy or lay professionals in a church structure; or doctors, lawyers, elected officials, and others in a variety of institutional settings.

On the fifth and final level, an institution's "foundations" relate to its stated or underlying purposes, its historical traditions, its foundational spiritual and moral teachings, and its financial undergirding. If any of these are affected by racism, the structures, practices, policies, and personnel of the institution will also be affected.

Some foundational racism questions and examples: To what degree has it become the purpose of the criminal justice system and the courts to watch over that part of America that is mostly people of color? If the private institutions (banks, supermarkets, hospitals, etc.) that provide products and services to American consumers do so on the basis of profit, resulting in the racially unjust distribution of products and services, where does the blame lie? Is this racism in the foundational base of our economic system?

Even the foundational assumptions of the Christian church must be subjected to examination. Does the fact that the church is the most segregated institution in the United States reflect racism only on levels of personnel, policy, practice, and structure? Or does it suggest that racism has become a part of the very foundational base of the church?

WHEN WE ANALYZE INDIRECT racism within institutional structures and foundations, we come face to face with the terrifying racism that continues to imprison us all, despite all our efforts to dislodge it. It is here, deep within our institutions, that we are confronted by the reason there has been no significant change in the racial injustice of our country, the reason racism is not lessening. It is here that we discover why residential segregation is worse than ever; why poverty rates for people of color are unchanging; why public schools, medical health, and criminal justice systems are all on the brink of bankruptcy. It is here that we discover why the sickness of racism does not respond to superficial palliatives, but requires deep surgery and a far more lengthy healing process than we thought previously.

Unless we work to eradicate racism at these structural and foundational levels, we are in serious danger of reaching the point where certain patterns of institutional behavior will become permanently embedded in our society. Racism will become so entrenched that it will take on a life of its own. Superficial corrective actions will only cause it to alter its course, with the result that the weakening of racism in one institution will strengthen it in another.

As we who are white become aware of the increasingly destructive power of racism and with the greater difficulty of eradicating it, we are called back to some old theological truths. Theologically, our need is not to reach out and change others, but to be changed ourselves. We are not first of all change agents but in need of an agent of change. We are called to confess our brokenness and recognize our need to be healed, to be made whole again. We are called to confess our belief in a God who is involved in the restoration of creation and in reconciling that which has been irreconcilable.

These theological beliefs lead to some practical organizing principles. We need to recognize that those of us who are in control of our institutions cannot be in control of bringing about change. This is very hard for us to accept because of our usual assumptions about power, and because we who are white—particularly those of us who are male—have such an overwhelming need to be in control.

The key to changing institutional racism is the building of broad-based coalitions that especially depend upon the leadership and guidance of racism's victims. People of color hold the key to change. They understand racism far better than we do, and they know what needs to be done to eliminate it.

In summary, the dismantling of institutional racism must go beyond the direct intentional racism of the past, and confront the unconscious indirect racism that has taken its place. It must go deeper than the institutional levels of personnel, policy, and practice to the levels of institutional structures and foundations.

This is not a task that can be carried out alone by those who control our institutions, but is a joint venture under the leadership of people of color. Although it is a lengthier and more difficult task than we can imagine, the walls of institutional racism can be broken down, brick by brick, step by step. That which has been built can be dismantled. And new, racially just institutions can be built to take their place. ■

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This article is adapted by Joseph Barndt and Charles Ruehle from a chapter on institutional racism in the book Dismantling Racism: The Continuing Challenge to White America, *by Joseph Barndt, Augsburg, 1991.*

THE PROMISED COMMUNITY

THE WAY OUT OF THE GHETTO AND OBLIVION

by Ron Spann

But as for me, my prayer is to thee, O Lord.

At an acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of thy steadfast love, answer me.

With thy faithful help rescue me from sinking in the mire. Let me be delivered from my enemies and from the deep waters.

Let not the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up, or the pit close its mouth over me.

–Psalm 69:13-15

OBLIVION • TO BE SWALLOWED UP into nothingness, to sink into oblivion and pass out of notice; this is the threat and the work of death, a truth which the poetry of Psalm 69 sends home through images of the terrible, elemental power of water in which oblivion becomes the metaphor of death. The threat of oblivion is fearsome, and it triggers an instinctual panic and rage in the human psyche to resist and to escape being thus overwhelmed. No one wants to be forgotten, of no account; no one wants to be so earthbound by the gravity of insignificance that neither escape nor flight is possible, only a sentence of despair.

On the other hand, that is exactly what most of the human race, whom we speak of abstractly as the masses, experience as daily reality. To exist as one of the masses is to live under a sentence of oblivion: the oblivion of being forgotten by justice or compassion; the oblivion of not being known in the integrity of one's personhood; the oblivion of being irrelevant to any enterprise that allows one to see the fruit of his or her own capacities received and celebrated. The masses are invisible, and their cry is unheard.

They are denied because it is a simple human necessity to deny the inevitable oblivion of death, of which they are the discomfiting reminder. Of course, the fact that oblivion threatens the entire race puts everyone in the same boat. Injustice describes the arrangement in which the desperate few appropriate the upper decks and consign the deprived majority to the lower ones, as if those higher up will escape drowning when it is time for the vessel to sink. Injustice is the few hiding themselves from the needs of the many; it is the rich and powerful refusing to accept the truth of their solidarity with all humankind: When the elite few dance on the upper decks, they dance over their own watery grave, trying to stall the everpresent threat of oblivion. "Let not the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up...."

THE GHETTO • THIS IS THE SENTENCE that hangs over the black ghetto—consignment to oblivion, with nowhere to go, and even if there were, with no way to get there. How useful is it to know as a member of the black masses that the doors to American institutions are now legally open to me, if I do not have the means to get there? No, there is no way out for the majority of us who live there. Nobody knows our name. From our viewpoint the ghetto is a vessel to bear the projected, unwanted burdens of those who contrive it.

GHETTOS ARE A MACHINERY OF OBLIVION THAT SERVES TO TRAP MASSES OF HUMANITY IN THE MIRED BACKWASHES OF HISTORY.

I was reminded vividly of this consignment to oblivion during a recent experience of crabbing in a South Carolina tidal marsh. A big part of crabbing is standing in bogs along channels where the crabs follow the tidal currents to the nearby immensity of the ocean. An ankle-deep position may be just an unwitting sidestep from a mudhole, in whose stench half your body, and most of your balance and dignity, can get mired.

City dude that I was, I waded in barefoot; and it was only a matter of time before a sidestep plunged me into deep mud, at the bottom of which a jagged oyster shell pierced my foot. While struggling out of the mud to firm ground, I had to stem a rush of anxious thoughts about septic toxins getting into my wound and guess whether my next step would be false or would lead out of the morass.

Ghettos are a machinery of oblivion that serves to trap masses of humanity in the mired backwashes of history. We are left there to forage for an existence in the enervating currents of boredom and monotony. Oblivion

is the ocean whose brackish waters ebb and flow through the inland where we live, able without warning to unleash floods of devastation. To dull its assaults on our sensibilities, we counterflood them with rhythm, blues, gospel, or anything else that registers louder than the menace of oblivion. If we don't, the pent-up waves of rage and panic that swell in our subconscious, a sea with its own tidal forces, threaten at any moment to burst through the dikes of repression or to run out through the floodgates of dissipation.

So we waver between effective and ineffective ways out of oblivion. That is how so many ghetto young end up grasping at the allure of a fast way out. Too often the only other choice is surrender to the allure of despair and to the forces of death for a grim trip on tickets to nowhere: the crime ticket, the drug ticket, the violence ticket. Too many folk we know end up slipping from ankle-deep involvements to depths which bristle with embedded dangers that daily drive fatal wounds through stray feet. "I sink in deep mire where there is no foothold...."

THE BELIEF OF GOD'S IMMINENT WORK IN THIS AGE HAS BEEN THE LEGACY OF THE BLACK CHURCH AT ITS BEST, WHETHER IN THE PLANTATION OR THE URBAN GHETTO, ALTHOUGH THAT LEGACY NOW BEGS FOR RENEWAL.

THE TIME-HONORED CHANCES for a fast way out of oblivion are the tickets pushed by Mammon. Its spirit hustles the masses every bit as much as it does the elite of this world. How many of us bank all our hopes on hitting the right number, the right lottery, the right jackpot, the right job, the right insurance settlement, the right lawsuit? On a visit to a neighborhood soup kitchen, I once saw someone fall into a broken section of sidewalk where the repair grid had been left askew. Unharmed, he regained his balance. The mishap was not two seconds old, however, when another bystander called out some envious advice, "Hey, bro', you got a lawsuit!"

The same hustler pushes another ticket-chance for a fast ride out of oblivion—the celebrity ticket: entertainment celebrity, athletic celebrity, religious celebrity, and in some cases, political celebrity. We endure these because, even though as misplaced celebrations they glorify the wrong vision of life, at least their instinct is for life. Nevertheless, celebrity passes most of us by, but transports just enough of us out to keep its empty rumors circulating among the credulous. In every neighborhood of the ghetto, someone seems to know someone else who took a celebrity trip to become anything they wished to be, but who returned empty-handed to oblivion.

There is a more sinister celebrity, however, which is the prodigy of the same powers that craft and control the ghetto machinery—military celebrity. Militarism is a power of darkness clothed as an angel of light. It boasts the power to bestow glory and personal transformation. Again, just enough of us return transformed to keep the lie afloat among the ghetto and other poor, but at the cost of a judgment on this society of indescribable wrath.

Even now it implodes in the lives of many who are disillusioned. They have been discharged back into oblivion without having become all that they can be in the Army. They've only become more lethal, and only death has been glorified.

Most of the time, however, the military simply represents a plodding necessity which is crassly promoted not for patriotism but for lucrative advantages in ads that are the economic lifeline of many black publications. Most of us will find a place in the blue- and white-collar labor force as part of a stressed but vital majority. We live life on dearly gained higher ground and strive for equilibrium, not having much hope of escape—we all know the way is heavily guarded from without—but struggling not to succumb to the behaviors of despair.

Others of us have fulfilled the dreams of forebears through education for professional careers, only to face the question of where to practice our skills. In the past most of us would do so in the ghetto, with an exceptional few moving into the capitalist marketplace to fill the rare openings it has been willing to cede. That is, our professionals once gained a livelihood chiefly within the structures of the common lot imposed on the masses. We knew, even if reluctantly, that we were in the same boat, and we shared in the building of other structures that were uniquely ours.

Now, history has shifted. The path from mass oblivion is less guarded, and for many of us it has become a way of escape into obliviousness. In our haste to trade historical places, we risk abandoning our shared historical projects, like so many high-class hustlers working the lucrative corporate gig, unheeding of our own.

Psalm 69 pricks our dull consciousness when it asks, "What I did not steal must I now restore? O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hid from you" (Psalm 69:5). Why would victims, who are themselves the descendants of a stolen people, so uncritically restore to the thief what has been stolen from themselves, as many black professionals now appear to be doing? Is this the purpose of education? If we black folk barter our souls in exchange for escape from social and economic oblivion, what do we gain? Sometimes we run amok in the mire of our own folly. Mammon, like wisdom, is justified by its deeds.

THE PROMISED COMMUNITY • IS IT NOT THE promise of the kingdom of God to be the one space where there is no oblivion? Regardless of the extent of the kingdom population, no one is unknown or consigned to non-productivity.

Indeed, the very dynamic of the kingdom is that of light making all things, all souls, visible. The kingdom is the sole hope of the masses indeed, of the whole race because only its structures establish the kind of interrelatedness that redeems individual personhood without requiring the misery of the many to secure the privilege of the few. It is being called and known by name, before being known by number, class, race, gender, or any other partial aspect of one's whole being. Your name is the

symbol of your wholeness and holds clues to the rest of your history.

The gospels record an important preview of this promise in the miracle of the loaves and the fishes. When Jesus faced the harassed multitudes in the wilderness, he succeeded in touching them at a level of felt need that no one else had ever reached—the need to be known in a community of spiritual, material, social, and emotional goods.

John Spragens Jr.

For a fleeting moment, the masses tasted the possibilities of peoplehood as Jesus knew that God willed to realize it among them. Thousands of men, women, and children ceased to be uneasy strangers and became a people of cooperative good will. Shrouded minds were enlightened, the suffering were healed, the hungry were fed economically and equitably.

The shepherdless experienced a compelling but sensitive leadership, which in John's gospel fetched an explicitly politicized response on the part of those who wanted to turn this king-for-a-day into a permanent ruler. Had he not redeemed them from estranging anonymity by grouping them in close-knit, manageable clusters of 50 and 100, where none would be overlooked and where order went hand in hand with peace and grace? Had they not found in him a potent solidarity with each other? In that theater of shalom, the power of oblivion had been routed by a demonstration of the promise of God's new order.

Is it not the function of our faith communities to make space for the dynamic of that new order to operate right here in our age? Is not community of the Holy Spirit the one way out of the ghetto, the one way to be engaged in the struggle that quickens human dignity and rescues it from oblivion? Is it not God's promise that the powers of the age to come are made available to operate decisively in this world as our life together becomes available to the Divine?

This has been the legacy of the black church at its best, whether in the plantation or the urban ghetto, although that legacy now begs for renewal. For the black church will have the lead role to play in the mediation of the promised community in the ghetto.

The function of the promised community is to make the invisible visible. It should never be possible to come into the community's midst just to slip into the background, because the effect of community should be to make you all too visible, to require your gift, to single you out; it is a stepping into the light. Entry into the community of Jesus is to receive the gift of sight and of hearing; nothing will ever look or sound the same. We gain sensibilities for things that never before lay in our awareness. In consequence of all this, a community risks judgment and danger to obscure the light or to ignore what it reveals of a sister's or brother's need.

This dynamic somehow has to become the focus of other tasks, such as our evangelizing. Faith speaks to faith. The presence of a people being faithful to what God is doing in their own history has the peculiar virtue of stirring other women and men to wake up to their unconscious dread of oblivion, to the contradictions of the non-effective behaviors by which they seek to escape oblivion, and to see the limitedness of the world's understanding of reality.

Such a focus on the part of any faith community within the ghetto is the only way to redeem the rest of our witness from deteriorating into a sick symbiosis of charity. To recall Irenaeus, a people fully alive is the glory of God. God's redeeming promise to us in the ghetto is to be just that, to see the promised community realized in our midst.

Let the oppressed see...and be glad; you who seek God, let your hearts revive.

For the Lord hears the needy, and does not despise [those] that are in bonds....

For God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah; and God's servants shall dwell there and possess it;

the children of God's servants shall inherit it, and those who love God's name shall dwell in it.

–Psalm 69:32-36

RON SPANN is the pastor of the Episcopal Church of the Messiah in Detroit, Michigan.

STUDY SESSION 9 / QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. The authors in this chapter agree about the need for white people to change. Why do they stress this? What are some of the ways that white people must change?

2. Catherine Meeks argues that white people today are in fact partners with their foreparents in the oppression of people of color because of the benefits they garner from their skin color. When white people deny the existence of this inheritance, Meeks claims, a sort of "pseudo-relating" between people of different races takes place. Are such pseudo-relationships a reality in your church and community? Why do you think this is so?

3. Do you share or differ with Catherine Meeks' assessment about the possibility of racial reconciliation? Why or why not?

4. Many organizations working on social change are not involved with the people who will benefit from the potential changes. How does Lorraine Granado think this contributes to a perpetuation of racism? What can be done to correct this situation?

5. Is it accurate to say that black people as a group are making progress economically and socially because a few black people have attained upper-middle-class status? Why or why not? What would be a more accurate indicator of the progress of the African-American community and other people of color?

6. James Lawson views the rebellion in Los Angeles as a burning bush experience. In what specific ways did the fires of LA get your attention? What were some of the reactions to these events in your community? Your congregation?

7. James Lawson, despite his deep commitment to nonviolence, believes that the LA uprising gave voice to a spark of hopeful resistance. How can that spirit of resistance and healthy, defiant rage be kindled without compromising a commitment to nonviolence?

8. Joseph Barndt and Charles Ruehle point out that civil rights legislation in the '60s eliminated major aspects of the legal forms of racism. But this did not end the scourge of racism in America. What forms of racism do these authors believe are most prevalent today? How can people become informed about these forms or levels of racism? What can be done legislatively, spiritually, and economically to combat these forms of racism?

9. Some anti-racist and feminist activists and theorists argue that it is appropriate, because of historical realities, to begin with an attitude of suspicion when analyzing institutions and structures in American society. Do you agree with this claim? Do you begin with an attitude of suspicion when thinking about organizations and institutions with which you are involved? Is it necessary to do such analysis for real institutional change to take place?

10. Have you ever experienced a state of oblivion as Ron Spann describes it? If you have felt despair caused by a feeling of insignificance, describe some of your feelings. If you have not, speculate about the feelings and thoughts you might have if you were.

11. What are the differences that Ron Spann describes between the church community and societal structures? Is Spann's description of the ethic of the church community reflected in your church?

12. What changes and activities will make churches a place where no one is left out?

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APPENDIX 1

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

THIS APPENDIX CONTAINS IDEAS for educational activities that can deepen your group's understanding of the scope of racism. The ideas also encourage your church to start exploring methods to combat racism.

The activities correspond to the sections of the resource. They are designed to involve others in the process of confronting racist attitudes in your church and community.

Children may participate in several of these activities. Other suggestions may include the entire family. It is important that you choose the activities that are most appropriate for your church and adapt others to fit your needs.

SESSION 1

1. Do a review of books, television shows, and movies, looking for the racist attitudes and assumptions that they perpetuate. Focus on books used by schools in your community, resources used in the Sunday school program at your church, popular television shows, and your local newspaper. If different members of your group or church take responsibility for specific parts of this research, a great deal of material could be explored in a short period of time.

Note the treatment of the history of minority persons in this material. How much space is devoted to stories of people of color? How deeply do these media explore the achievements of minority persons? Consider ways that you can inform others about what you have found. Children could participate in this project, leading to valuable family discussions.

2. Make diagrams of the organizational structure of your denomination regionally and your local church. Investigate how many minority people are in positions of real authority and decision making. This information could be shared within your group or with your church.

3. Keep a record of your own language and thoughts to see how they perpetuate racism or racial stereotypes. A group discussion of your findings may contribute to greater change in your thoughts and behaviors. (Pay special attention to the ideas that Calvin Morris talks about in his article.)

SESSION 2

1. Invite people to your church who have been victims of racial violence. You can contact people who have experienced this through groups that work to combat racial violence. If the victims of racial violence themselves would rather not share their stories, they may refer you to an attorney or a speaker from an advocacy group who helped them confront the violence. Listen to their stories. A conversation about how your church can be supportive of others who face this violence in the future may be a follow-up activity to hearing from these people.

2. Read the literature published by hate groups active in your area to determine how to counter their message more effectively. Groups that combat racial violence probably keep files of this material as well as information about the methods used by hate groups to recruit new people. Develop and maintain relationships with groups who oppose the hate groups. Seek guidance from groups such as an anti-Klan network about how your church can be involved in their work.

Teen-agers often are special targets of hate groups. Church youth groups may find it worthwhile to explore this subject and educate the youth on the danger of such groups.

3. To learn more about the way the government perpetuates racism through "legal" methods, listen to people who have firsthand experience at facing and resisting this type of oppression. You may want to consider speakers such as refugees who have fled the wars in El Salvador and Guatemala and are being pursued by the U.S. government, Native Americans who can tell of the current (as well as historical) struggle of their tribe with the government, and civil rights workers who continue to fight for proper enforcement of civil rights laws by the government.

SESSION 3

1. Invite prominent minority leaders, as well as other minority persons, to share how they have experienced racism in your community. You may also want to invite speakers from your denomination's racial justice commission to talk about the racism they have experienced in your denomination.

2. Invite minority members of your church to preach or lead worship on Laity Sunday or some other occasion.

3. If a high level of trust and a willingness to work exist among the members of your church, a weekend retreat focusing on racism may be productive. Invite a facilitator who is experienced in leading such retreats.

A balance of small- and large-group discussions may encourage both the sharing of experiences of racism and the expression of desires, fears, hopes, and apprehensions about the prospect for racial justice in your church. Any racial tension that may exist at your church may be addressed during these discussions. It is important that everyone feel comfortable in sharing their experiences and that the communication be honest. A similar retreat may be useful for youth groups.

4. Attend cultural gatherings, festivals, lectures, and seminars that are open to the public and are planned by minority persons in your community. Attending these types of events can be educational and can help to change personal biases and preconceived notions. Many of these activities could be shared by families.

5. Analyze the racial and class realities of your community. If you believe that your community could benefit from a statement like the one offered by the Los Angeles Theological Reflection Group, invite people to help draft such a document. Offer it through the church and the media to your community.

SESSION 4

1. Invite prominent white leaders and other white people to talk about their experience of dealing with their own racism. As with the first suggestion for Session 3, it is important to invite a broad cross-section of people to speak, including those who do not usually speak publicly.

2. Look at the history of your denomination and your church to see how white racism has affected the development of your denomination. Talk with longtime members to discover your church's response to and involvement in the civil rights movement and other movements for justice. Listening to the stories of the longtime members would be an interesting activity for children.

SESSION 5

1. Hold a series of forums featuring people from different sectors of the community. A diversity of views should be expressed. Suggestions for change which would create a more just society should be shared. African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, whites, and others from the business community, the government, community organizations, and the church should be invited.

2. Visit historic sites that commemorate the achievement of minority persons. These sites do not have to be "officially" recognized. In fact, many places that are important to minority people have not been formally recognized and often provide the most important insights.

A visit to a museum operated by or featuring a special exhibit on African-American, Native American, Asian-American, or Latino history and culture would also be a good educational experience. These certainly could be family activities.

3. Individually or in small groups, visit churches in your area that are different from yours in terms of their racial and economic background.

4. Invite preachers from different racial groups to preach at your church. Their sermons do not (and probably should not) have to focus exclusively on racism and should be rooted in scripture.

5. Subscribe to a magazine that serves a racial community different than yours. This can range from general-interest magazines to magazines specifically advocating social justice concerns. Magazines for children are also available.

SESSION 6

1. Have a discussion group read one of the books listed in Appendix 3. Try to select a book that exposes the members of your group to a new perspective. It is important to become familiar with the experiences and perspectives presented by minority people.

Be especially aware of books that look at the struggle for equal rights in the last half of the 20th century. Make note of references to integration policies.

2. Research the history of minority-owned businesses and minority-controlled institutions in your community. Be sure to determine how many still exist and the state of those institutions that have survived. Support minority-owned institutions when possible.

SESSION 7

1. Find regional groups organized around support for American Indian treaty, sovereignty, and religious rights. Since most states and the federal government are trying to "redefine" their commitment to these treaties, groups have arisen throughout the country. Research the groups first, as there are many different styles of support, some of which are not necessarily helpful.

2. Attend cultural events of American Indian communities, such as pow wows and craft fairs, that are open to the public. Musicians and artisans explain the cultural and spiritual significance of these activites, giving participants a better understanding of an American Indian worldview. Children could also benefit from exposure to another culture.

3. Note the names of sports teams in your area that contain racist images. Discuss the impact of these names with fans. Write letters of protest offering alternative suggestions to the teams' owners and public relations representatives, as well as to your local newspapers.

SESSION 8

Determine ways that you and your congregation can go beyond merely speaking on behalf of the poor. Find ways to speak with the poor. Consider changes necessary in your lifestyle in order for the construction of a new society that includes all people in its decision making.

SESSION 9

The major responsibility now is to develop an ongoing effort to combat personal and corporate racism. This task should be incorporated into all aspects of your church's life: the Sunday school curriculum, Sunday worship services, and the mission/outreach program. While this is being done, it is still important to maintain a separate group whose primary focus is on developing programs to combat racism.

If there is a serious commitment to make the confronting of racism an integral part of your church life, the methods of determining policy and setting priorities within your congregation must be examined. Make plans to attend committee and board meetings to encourage a strong commitment to confront racism and work for justice. Look carefully at what your church has already done and make proposals to extend this work or to begin it. Consider ways to involve the pastor and committee chairs in this process, if they are not already involved.

A number of activities can be carried out at this stage, including those mentioned above. Beyond these activities, there are some long-term goals that you might want to work for which will contribute to a just society. Ideas for these activities and goals can be found in the readings for this section of the resource. ■

APPENDIX 2

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

REGARDLESS OF THEIR racial composition, churches can benefit from interaction with other churches and national organizations who are working to combat racism. Opportunities to work with and learn from others can help deepen your individual commitment, broaden your understanding of the problem, and strengthen your work to end systemic racism.

Each major denomination has an office that works on issues of racial justice. These national offices can provide a local church with much assistance. Since they have contacts across the country, the denominational office can help you locate leaders in your community. They also are an excellent resource for helping people understand more deeply the issues that face minority communities. These national and local denominational offices would be an important initial contact for your church.

In addition to denominational offices, a large number of independent national organizations—both religious and secular—are involved in work against racism. The following list offers a variety of national organizations with differing perspectives and activities. Becoming aware of the range of perspectives would help develop a congregation's plan of action.

Most of these organizations have local chapters in cities and towns across the country. They would be willing to put you in contact with these local groups. Most also produce educational resources or newsletters that would provide you with current information. Beyond the assistance that these denominational and independent groups can give you on a local level, affiliation and involvement with these groups will also help build a national movement to end racism.

The groups listed work in the context of a particular minority community.

ASIAN AMERICANS

Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, 99 Hudson St., New York, NY 10013; (212) 966-5932. This membership organization conducts impact, test-case litigation of laws that have relevance for Asian Americans. It also works in areas of immigration, employment, racial violence, and voting rights. Its newsletter, *Outlook*, is published twice a year.

Asian Women United, 3538 Telegraph Ave., Oakland, CA 94609; (415) 547-3258. This organization was formed in 1976 to promote the social, economic, and general welfare of Asian-American women. It has published a number of books and videotapes about Asian-American women. Its members are Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and South and Southeast Asian women.

Council of Asian-American Women, 700 7th St. SE, Washington, DC 20003; (202) 594-3181. The council coordinates activities of interest to Asian-American women. It both studies issues relevant to Asian-American women and recommends actions.

Ecumenical Working Group of Asian and Pacific Americans, 1824 Selma Ave., Youngstown, OH 44504; (216) 743-8758. This group works with local chapters and affiliates to end violence against Asian- and Pacific-Americans. It publishes a monthly newsletter to further this goal.

Pacific Asian American Center for Theology and Strategies, 1798 Scenic Ave., Berkeley, CA 94709; (415) 848-0173. This ecumenical group works on issues of justice, peace, and theology within the Asian-American community. It publishes a newsletter twice a year and a journal annually.

To Break the Silence Coalition Against Anti-Asian Violence, c/o Asian Law Caucus, 1322 Webster St., Suite 410, Oakland, CA 94612; (415) 268-0192. This coalition works primarily in the San Francisco Bay area, but its quarterly newsletter is distributed nationwide. It has contacts with community groups in other parts of the country that are working to end anti-Asian violence.

AFRICAN AMERICANS

Black Dollar Days Task Force, 116 21st Ave., Seattle, WA 98122; (206) 323-4212. Founded in 1988, this organization is a community organization working to alleviate poverty in Seattle's African-American community through the empowerment and promotion of African-American-owned businesses.

Center for Democratic Renewal, Box 10500, Atlanta, GA 30310; (404) 221-0225. This group was organized to counteract the influence of the Ku Klux Klan. It is a membership group of both organizations and individuals. It serves as a communications network and information resource.

Congress of National Black Churches, 1025 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 712, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 457-0234. This is an umbrella organization of the seven major black denominations. It develops programs for the support of the black family, economic development, theological education, and communications.

Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, 449 Auburn Ave. NE, Atlanta, GA 30312; (404) 524-1956. The center assembles information on Martin Luther King Jr. and his family. It also works with programs that carry out King's ideals.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), 4805 Mount Hope Drive, Baltimore, MD 21215; (301) 358-8900. The NAACP provides resources to study and supports legal actions to ensure the enforcement of rights guaranteed by the Constitution. It publishes the monthly *Crisis* and other reports on subjects related to its mission.

National Black United Front, 334 New York Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11225; (718) 857-1427. This organization works to unite and strengthen black culture. Its purpose is to build a grassroots movement dedicated to the elimination of racial prejudice and conditions negatively affecting black people. It has local chapters across the country.

National Urban League, 500 East 62nd St., New York, NY 10021; (212) 310-9000. This organization seeks full civil rights for minorities. It has 100 affiliated offices located all over the country and operates programs in the areas of job training, educational development, health, law, and consumerism. The Urban League publishes a series of journals on jobs and the economic status of minorities.

Southern Christian Leadership Conference, 334 Auburn Ave. NE, Atlanta, GA 30303; (404) 522-1420. Local chapters, using methods of nonviolent, social pressure, seek to obtain equality for black Americans. SCLC publishes a monthly newsletter and holds annual meetings.

LATINO AMERICANS

League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), 401 W. Commerce, Suite 222, Arlington, TX 78207; (512) 223-3377. This membership organization seeks to improve the status

of Hispanic persons in the United States. LULAC has chapters in areas of the country with Hispanic populations, and is involved with a number of projects concerned with employment and equal access. *LULAC Today* is published monthly.

Mexican American Cultural Center, 3019 West French Place, San Antonio, TX 78228; (512) 732-2156. This national center for pastoral education and language studies provides a new perspective on Hispanic reality; it is especially for those already involved in Latino ministry.

Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), 634 S. Spring St., 11th floor, Los Angeles, CA 90014; (213) 629-2512. MALDEF litigates civil rights cases involving Hispanics, sponsors community education and information projects, and researches public policy issues. It publishes a quarterly newsletter.

National Council of La Raza, 20 F St. NW, Washington, DC 20001; (202) 628-9600. The National Council of La Raza is a national Hispanic technical assistance and advocacy organization composed of approximately 80 "affiliate" organizations in Hispanic communities throughout 21 states and the District of Columbia. The council has program offices in Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Edinburg, Texas.

United Farm Workers of America (UFW), La Paz, Keene, CA 93570; (805) 822-5571. UFW is a national organization providing collective bargaining for its members. It also conducts programs to promote civil rights in an effort to combat poverty. Its magazine, *Food and Justice*, is published monthly.

NATIVE AMERICANS/INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Americans for Indian Opportunity (AIO), 3508 Garfield St. NW, Washington, DC 20007; (202) 338-8809. This organization focuses primarily on issues of tribal governance, the enhancement of skills for tribal leaders, and the education of Congress and federal agencies on tribal issues.

Association on American Indian Affairs Inc., 95 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016; (212) 689-8720. This national membership organization assists Indian and Alaskan Native communities in working for social and civil equality. Major concerns include land rights, economic development, education, and legal defense. *Indian Affairs* is published three times a year, and *The Indian Family Defense* is published quarterly.

Council of Energy Resource Tribes, 1580 Logan, Suite 400, Denver, CO 80203; (303) 832-6600. The council works with tribes to ensure their sovereignty over minerals, oil, and other resources on their land. They are currently working with more than 40 tribes on these issues.

HONOR Inc., 2647 N. Stowell Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53211; (414) 963-1324. HONOR Inc. (Honor Our Neighbors Origins and Rights) is a national ecumenical human rights coalition focused exclusively on Native American issues. Members are Indian and non-Indian, joining together in the struggle for justice.

National Congress of American Indians, 804 D St. NE, Washington, DC 20002; (202) 546-9404. Since its formation in 1944, this organization has served to represent the interests of approximately 150 member tribes. The membership also includes individuals interested in Indian rights. Areas of primary concern include treaty rights, alcoholism and drug abuse, economic development, education, health, housing, and tribal sovereignty. Its newsletter, *The Sentinel*, includes announcements and status reports on issues affecting American Indians.

National Urban Indian Council, 1855 Pearl St., Suite 1A, Denver, CO 80210; (303) 698-2911. This is a Native American organization concerned with the lives of urban Indians. Its goal is to promote the self-sufficiency of Native Americans and Alaska Natives.

Native American Rights Fund, 1506 Broadwater, Boulder, CO 80302; (303) 447-8760. This national Native American law firm represents individuals and tribes in important cases that affect all Native American people. It is dedicated to the promotion of the rights of Native Americans. *Native American Rights Fund Legal Review* is published quarterly.

Native Americans in Solidarity With Central America, 3532 W. Monroe Road, Alma, MI 48801; (517) 463-6531. This is a faith-based organization of Native Americans who believe that the indigenous peoples will inherit the Earth. Just as in 1492, they work to reach out to their non-Indian brothers and sisters and teach them to live in harmony and unity with The Great Spirit.

MULTIRACIAL FOCUS

Crossroads, 427 East 140th St., Bronx, NY 10454; (212) 402-6336. This ecumenical ministry for racial justice provides education and training to dismantle racism and build multicultural diversity.

Communitas Inc., 245 Main St., #207, Northampton, MA 01060; (413) 584-5666. This not-for-profit organization sends biracial teams to houses of worship, community groups, human service agencies, schools, and colleges to confront racism from personal, cultural, and institutional perspectives.

National Council of Churches Racial Justice Working Group of the Prophetic Justice Unit, 475 Riverside Drive, Room 572, New York, NY 10115; (212) 870-2298. Connecting movement groups with the church, this coalition is committed to advocacy and organizing for racial justice, anti-racism trainings, resource coordination and development, and research for social transformation.

The Rainbow Coalition, 733 15th St. NW, Suite 327, Washington, DC 20005; (202) 638-0580. This national membership organization addresses a broad range of peace and justice issues. Its newsletter, *The Rainbow Organizer*, is available to all members.

Rural Advancement Fund of the National Sharecroppers Fund Inc., 2128 Commonwealth Ave., Charlotte, NC 28205; (704) 334-3051. The Rural Advancement Fund offers technical assistance, representation, and networking opportunities to small family farmers.

Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education (SCUPE), 30 West Chicago Ave., Chicago, IL 60610; (312) 944-2153. As an interdenominational, educational agency, SCUPE provides leadership development for ministry in a multicultural, urban environment. It hosts a biannual Congress on Urban Ministry, which focused in 1992 on dismantling racism.

Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice, P.O. Box 811, Birmingham, AL 35201; (205) 781-1781. This multiracial, multi-issue network of people throughout the South works in their communities against racism, war, economic injustice, and environmental destruction. SOC provides grassroots groups with resource people who will share experiences of multiracial organizing at the local level.

Southwest Organizing Project, 211 Tenth St. SW, Albuquerque, NM 87102; (505) 247-8832. This 10-year-old multiracial, grassroots organization empowers the disenfranchised of the Southwest to realize racial and gender equality, as well as social and economic justice. It has played a key role in fighting environmental racism.

United Church of Christ Commission For Racial Justice, 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115; (216) 736-2100. This national civil rights agency addresses a broad range of racial justice issues within the church and the larger society. It publishes a weekly commentary called *Civil Rights Journal*. ■

APPENDIX 3

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

THE FOLLOWING BIBLIOGRAPHY includes a wide selection of books for additional reading. The perspectives offered in these resources are varied; some of these authors and organizations offer approaches and responses to racism that differ from those presented in this study guide. Each viewpoint is important to consider as you become involved in the work for racial justice.

MULTIRACIAL

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The Multicultural Resources Center. Resources and training workshops for curriculum developers, local churches, and researchers in preparing material for use in churches. Affiliated with the National Council of Churches. For more information write MRC, 1205 Palmyra Ave., Richmond, VA 23227; (804) 358-8306.

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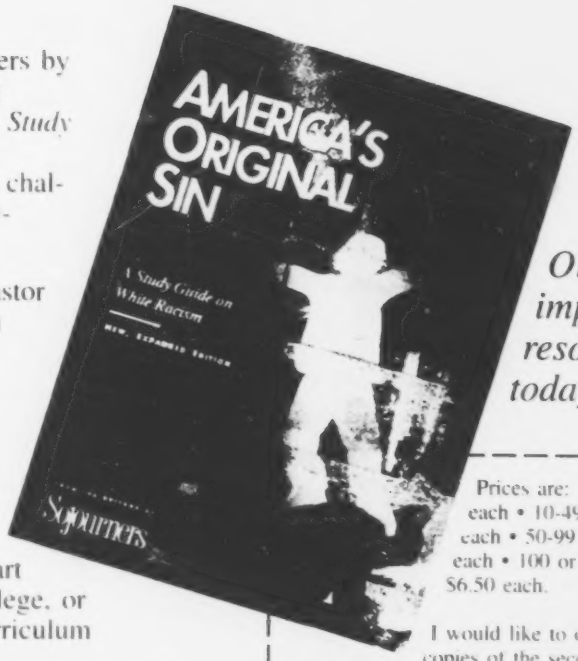

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